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Godolphin

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G O D O L P H I N,

OR,

THE OATH.

Sleep,
Voluptuous Cæsar, and security
Seize on thy powers !

Ben Jonson's Fall of Sejanus.

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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GODOLPHIN.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE STRONG AS DEATH—AND NOT LESS BITTER.

WHEN Godolphin returned home, the door was open, as Lucilla had left it, and he went at once into his apartment. He hastened to the table on which he had left, with the negligence arising from the emotions of the moment, the letter to Constance;—the paper on which Lucilla had written her name alone met his eye. While yet stunned and amazed, his servant and Lucilla's entered: in a few moments he learned all they had to tell him;

the rest Lucilla's handwriting did indeed sufficiently explain. He comprehended all; and in a paroxysm of alarm and remorse, he dispersed his servants, and hurried himself in search of her. He went to the house of her relations; they had not seen or heard of her. It was now night, and every obstacle in the way of his search presented itself. Not a clue could be traced; or, sometimes following a description that seemed to him characteristic, he chased, and found some wanderer—how unlike Lucilla! Towards daybreak he returned home, after a vain and weary search, and his only comfort was in learning from her attendant that she had about her a sum of money which he knew would in Italy always purchase safety and attention. Yet, alone, at night, in the streets,—so utter a stranger as she was to the world,—so young and so lovely—he shuddered, he gasped for breath at the

idea. Might she destroy herself? That hideous question forced itself upon him; he could not exclude it: he trembled when he recalled her impassioned and keen temper; and when, in remembering the tone and words of his letter to Constance, he felt how desperate a pang every sentence must have inflicted upon her. And, indeed, even his imagination could not equal the truth, when it attempted to sound the depths of her wounded feelings. He only returned home to sally out again. He now employed the police, and those most active and vigilant agents that at Rome are willing to undertake all enterprizes; with diligence, he could not but feel assured of discovering her.

Still, however, noon—evening came on, and no tidings. As he returned home, in the faint hope that some intelligence might await him there, his servant hurried eagerly out to him

with a letter—it was from Lucilla, and it was worthy of her: I give it to the reader.

LUCILLA'S LETTER.

“ I have read your letter to another ! Are not these words sufficient to tell you all ? All ? no ! you never, never, never can tell how crushed and broken my heart is. Why ? because you are a man, and because you have never loved as I loved. Yes, Godolphin, I knew that I was not one whom you *could* love. I am a poor, ignorant, untutored girl, with nothing at my heart but a great world of love which I could never tell. Thou saidst I could not comprehend *thee* : alas ! how much was there—is there—in *my* nature—in *my* feelings, which have been, and ever will be, unfathomable to thy sight !

“ But all this matters not ; the tie between us is eternally broken. Go, dear, dear Go-

dolphin ! link thyself to that happier other one—seemingly so much more thine equal than the lowly and uncultivated Lucilla. Grieve not for me ; you have been kind, most kind, to me. You have taken away hope, but you have given me pride in its stead ;—the blow which has crushed my heart has given strength to my mind. Were you and I left alone on the earth, we must still be apart ; I could never, never live with you again ; my world is not your world ; when our hearts have ceased to be in common, what of union is there left to us ? Yet it would be something if, since the future is shut out from me, you had not also deprived me of the past : I have not even the privilege of looking back ! What ! all the while my heart was lavishing itself upon thee—all the while I had no other thought, no other dream but thee—all the while I sat by thy side, and watched thee, hanging on

thy wish, striving to foresee thy thoughts—
all the while I was the partner of thy days,
and at night my bosom was thy pillow, and
I could not sleep from the bliss of think-
ing thee so near me: *thy* heart was then
indeed away from me; *thy* thoughts es-
tranged; I was to *thee* only an encumbrance
—a burthen, from which *thy* sigh was to be
free! Can I ever look back then to those
hours we spent together? All that vast his-
tory of the past, is but one record of bitter-
ness and shame. And yet, I cannot blame
thee; it were something if I could: in propor-
tion as you loved me not, you were kind
and generous; and God will bless you for
that kindness to the poor orphan. A harsh
word, a threatening glance, I never had the
affliction to feel from thee. Looking back
over the past, I am only left to sadden at
that gentleness which never came from love!

“ Go, Godolphin: I repeat the prayer in all humbleness and sincerity. Go to her whom thou lovest, perhaps as I loved thee; go, and in your happiness I shall feel at last something of happiness myself. We part for ever, but there is no unkindness between us; there is no reproach that one can make against the other. If I have sinned, it has been against Heaven and not thee; and thou—why, even against Heaven *mine* was *all* the fault—the rashness—the madness! You will return to your native land; to that proud England, of which I have so often questioned you, and which, even in your answers, seems to me so cold and desolate a spot, a land so hostile to love. There, in your new ties you will learn new objects, and you will be too busy, and too happy, for your thoughts to turn to me again. Too happy? no, I wish I could think you would be; but I, whom you deny to possess sympathies with

you—I have at least penetrated so far into your heart as to fear that, come what may, you will never find the happiness you ask. You exact too much from the ideal ; you dream too fondly, not to be discontented with the truth. What has happened to me, must happen to my rival, will happen to you throughout life. Your being is in one world, your soul is in another. Alas ! how foolishly I run on, as if seeking in your nature, and not circumstances, the blow that separates us.

“ I shall hasten to a conclusion. I have gained a refuge in this convent ; seek me not, follow me not, I implore, I adjure thee ; it can serve no purpose. I would not see thee ; the veil is already drawn between thy world and me, and it only remains, in kindness and in charity, to bid each other farewell. Farewell ! then. I think I am now with thee ; I think my lips have breathed aside thy long hair, and

cling to thy fair temples with a sister's—that word at least is left me — *a sister's* kiss. As we stood together, at the grey dawn, when we last parted—as then, in sorrow and in tears, I hid my face in thy bosom—as then, unconscious of what was to come, I poured forth *my* assurances of faithful, unswerving thought—as thrice thou torest thyself from me and didst thrice return,—and as, through the comfortless mists of morn, I gazed after thee, and fancied for hours that thy last words yet rang in my ear; so now, but with different feelings, I once more bid thee farewell—farewell for ever!”

CHAPTER II.

GODOLPHIN.

“No, Signor, she will not see you!”

“You have given my note—given that ring?”

“I have, and she still refuses.”

“Refuses?—and is that all the answer? no line to—to break the reply?”

“Signor, I have spoken all my message.”

“Cruel, hard-hearted! May I call again, think you, with a better success?”

“The convent, at stated times, is open to strangers, Signor, but so far as the young Sig-

nora is concerned, I feel assured, from her manner, that your visits will be in vain."

"Ay, ay, I understand you, madam; you wish to entice her from the wicked world,—to suffer not human friendships to disturb her thoughts. Good heavens! and can she, so young, so ardent, dream of taking the veil?"

"She does not dream of it," said the nun coolly; "she has no intention of remaining here long."

"Befriend me, I beseech you!" cried Godolphin, eagerly: "restore her to me; let me only come once to her within these walls, and I will enrich your——."

"Signor, good day."

Dejected, melancholy, and yet enraged amidst all his sorrows, Godolphin returned to Rome. Lucilla's letter rankled in his heart like the barb of a broken arrow; but the stern resolve with which she had refused to see him,

appeared to the pride that belongs to manhood a harsh and unfeeling insult. He knew not that poor Lucilla's eyes had watched him from the walls of the convent, and that while, for his sake more than her own, she had refused the meeting he prayed for, she had not the resolution to deny herself the gazing on him once more.

He reached Rome: he found a note on his table from Lady Charlotte Deerham, saying she had heard it was his intention to leave Rome, and begging him to receive from her that evening her *adieux*. "Lady Erpingham will be with me," concluded the note.

This brought a new train of ideas. Since Lucilla's flight, all thought but of Lucilla had been expelled from Godolphin's mind. We have seen how his letter to Lady Erpingham miscarried: he had written no other. How strange to Constance must seem his conduct,

after the scene of the avowal in the Syren's Cave: no excuse on the one hand, no explanation on the other; and now, what explanation *should* he give? There was no longer a necessity, for it was no longer honesty and justice to fly from the bliss that might await him—the love of his early-worshipped Constance. But could he, with a heart yet bleeding from the violent rupture of one tie, form a new one? Agitated, restless, self-reproachful, bewildered, and uncertain, he could not bear thoughts that demanded answers to a thousand questions; he flung from his cheerless room, and hastened, with a feverish pulse and burning temples, to Lady Charlotte Deerham's.

“Good God! how ill you look, Mr. Godolphin,” cried the hostess involuntarily.

“Ill! — ha, ha! I never was better; but I have just returned from a long journey: I

have not touched food nor felt sleep for three days and nights. I! — ha, ha! no, I'm not ill;" and, with an eye bright with gathering delirium, Godolphin glared around him.

Lady Charlotte drew back, and shuddered; Godolphin felt a cool soft hand laid on his: he turned, and the face of Constance, full of anxious and wondering pity, was turned towards him. He stood arrested for one moment, and then, seizing that hand, pressed it to his lips — his heart — and burst suddenly into tears. That paroxysm saved his life; for days afterwards he was insensible.

CHAPTER III.

THE DECLARATION. THE APPROACHING NUPTIALS.

IS THE IDEALIST CONTENTED?

As Godolphin returned to health, and, day after day, the presence of Constance, her soft tones, her deep eyes, grew on him, renewing their ancient spells, the reader must perceive that bourne to which events necessarily tended. For some weeks not a word that alluded to the Syren's Cave was uttered by either; but when that allusion came at last from Godolphin's lips, the next moment he was kneeling beside Constance, her hand sur-

rendered to his, and her proud cheek all bathed in the blushes of sixteen.

“And so,” said Saville, “you, Percy Godolphin, are at last the accepted lover of Constance Countess of Erpingham. When is the wedding to be?”

“I know not,” replied Godolphin musingly.

“Well, I almost envy you; you will be very happy for six weeks, and that’s something in this disagreeable world: yet, now I look on you, I grow reconciled to myself again; you do not seem so happy as that I, Augustus Saville, should envy you while my digestion lasts. What are you thinking of?”

“Nothing,” replied Godolphin, vacantly; the words of Lucilla were weighing at his heart, like a prophecy working towards its fulfilment; “*Come what may, you will never find the happiness you ask: you exact too much from the ideal.*”

At that moment Lady Erpingham's page entered with a note from Constance, and a present of flowers. No one ever wrote half so beautifully, so spiritually, as Constance; and to Percy the wit was so intermingled with the tenderness!

"No," said he, burying his lips among the flowers; "no! I discard the foreboding; with you I must be happy!" But conscience, still unsilenced, whispered—*Lucilla!*

The marriage was to take place at Rome. The day was fixed; and, owing to Constance's rank, beauty, and celebrity, the news of the event created throughout "the English in Italy" no small sensation. There was a great deal of gossip, of course, on the occasion; and some of this gossip found its way to the haughty ears of Constance. It was said, that she had made a strange match—that it was a curious weakness, in one so proud and bril-

liant, to look no loftier than a private and not very wealthy gentleman; handsome, indeed, and reputed clever, but one who had never *distinguished himself* in any thing — who never would!

Constance was alarmed and stung, not at the vulgar accusation, the paltry sneer, but at the prophecy relating to Godolphin, “he had never distinguished himself in any thing—he never would.” Rank, wealth, power, Constance felt these she wanted not, these she could command of herself; but she felt also that a nobler vanity of her nature required that the man of her mature and second choice should not be one, in repute, of that mere herd, above whom, in reality, his genius so eminently exalted him. She felt it essential to her future happiness that Godolphin’s ambition should be aroused, that he should share her ardour for those great objects that she felt would for ever be dear to her.

“ I love Rome !” said she, passionately, one day, as, accompanied by Godolphin, she left the Vatican ; “ I feel my soul grow larger amidst its ruins. Elsewhere, through Italy, we live in the present, but here in the past.”

“ Say not that that is the better life, dear Constance ; the present—can we surpass it.”

Constance blushed, and thanked her lover with a look that told him he was understood.

“ Yet,” said she, returning to the subject, “ who can breathe the air that is rife with glory, and not be intoxicated with emulation ? Ah, Percy !”

“ Ah, Constance ! and what wouldst thou have of me ? Is it not glory enough to be thy lover ?”

“ Let the world be as proud of my choice as I am.”

Godolphin frowned ; he penetrated in those words to Constance’s secret meaning. Accustomed to be an idol from his boyhood, he

resented the notion that he had need of exertion to render him worthy even of Constance; and sensible that it might be thought he had made an alliance beyond his just pretensions, he felt doubly tenacious as to his own claims. Godolphin frowned then, and turned away in silence. Constance sighed; she felt that she might not renew the subject. But, after a pause, Godolphin himself continued it.

“Constance,” said he, in a low firm voice, “let us understand each other. You are all to me in the world; fame, and honour, and station, and happiness. Am I also that all to you? If there be any thought at your heart which whispers you, ‘you might have served your ambition better; you have done wrong in yielding to love and love only,’—then, Constance, pause; it is not too late.”

“Do I deserve this, Percy?”

“ You drop words sometimes,” answered Godolphin, “ that seem to indicate that you think the world may cavil at your choice, and that some exertion on *my* part is necessary to maintain *your* dignity. Constance, need I say, again and again, that I adore the very dust you tread on. But I have a pride, a self-respect, beneath which I cannot stoop ; if you really think or feel this, I will not condescend to receive even happiness from you : let us part.”

Constance saw his lips white and quivering as he spoke ; her heart smote her, her pride vanished ; she sank on his shoulder, and forgot even ambition ; nay, while she inly murmured at his sentiment, she felt it breathed a sort of nobility that she could not but esteem. She strove then to lull to rest all her more worldly anxieties for the future ; to hope that, cast on the exciting stage of English ambition,

Godolphin must necessarily be stirred despite of his creed ; and, if she sometimes doubted, sometimes despaired of this, she felt at least that his presence had become dearer to her than all things. Nay, she checked her own enthusiasm, her own worship of fame, since they clashed with his opinions ; so marvellously and insensibly had Love bowed down the proud energies and the lofty soul of the daughter of John Vernon.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDALS.—THE ACCIDENT.—THE FIRST LAWFUL
POSSESSION OF LOVE.

IT was the morning on which Constance and Godolphin were to be married; it had been settled that they were to proceed the same day towards Florence; and Constance was at her toilette when her woman laid beside her a large bouquet of flowers.

“From Percy—from Mr. Godolphin, I mean?” she asked, taking them up.

“No, my lady; a young woman outside the palace gave them me, and bade me in such

pretty English, be sure to give them to your ladyship! and when I offered her money, she would not take any thing, my lady."

"The Italians are a courteous people," replied Constance; and she placed the flowers in her bosom.

As, after the ceremony, Godolphin assisted his bride into the carriage, a woman, wrapped in a large cloak, pressed forward for a moment. Godolphin had in that moment turned his head to give some order to his servant, and with the next the woman had sunk back into the throng that was drawn around the carriage—yet not before Constance had heard her murmur in a deep, admiring, yet sorrowful tone: "Beautiful! *how* beautiful!—Ah me!"

"Did you observe what beautiful eyes that young girl had?" asked Constance as the carriage whirled off.

"What girl? I saw nothing but you!"

“Hark! there is a noise behind.”

Godolphin looked out; the crowd seemed collected round one person.

“Only a young woman fainted, sir!” said his servant seated behind. “She fell down in a fit just before the horses; but they started aside, and did not hurt her.”

“That is fortunate!” said Godolphin, reseating himself by his new bride; “drive on faster.”

At Florence, Godolphin revealed to Constance the outline of Lucilla’s history, and Constance shared somewhat of the feelings with which he told it.

“I left,” said he, “in the hands of the Abbess, a sum to be entirely at Lucilla’s control, whether she stay in the convent or not, and which will always secure to her an independence. But I confess I should like now, once

more to visit the convent, and learn on what fate she has decided."

"You would do well, dear Percy," replied Constance, who from her high and starred sphere could form even no dream of jealousy; "indeed, I think, you could do no less."

And Godolphin covered those generous lips with the sweet kisses in which esteem begins to mingle with passion. What has the Earth like that first fresh union of two hearts long separated, and now blent for ever! It is this which gives to lawful, what clandestine love can never attain — *the feeling of certainty in the bond*. Those whose love is not of the altar, a thousand accidents may divide; but in that love hallowed and first possessed, we know not fear, and repose in the full enjoyment of the present—forgetful that while fate has less power to sever, custom has no less the privilege to cool. However close the sympathy

between woman and her lover — however each thinks to have learned the other—what a world is there left *unlearned*, until marriage brings all those charming confidences, that holy and sweet intercourse, which leave no separate interest, no undivided thought ! To be sure, however, this state is very rare, and marriage in general is only the patent granted to two people to quarrel undisturbed. But there is one thing that distinguishes the conversation of young married people from that of lovers on a less sacred footing — *they talk of the future !* Other lovers talk rather of the past ; an uncertainty pervades *their* hereafter ; they feel, they recoil from, it ; they are sensible that their plans are not one and indivisible. But married people are always laying out the “ TO COME ; ” always talking over their plans : this often takes something away from the tenderness of affection, but how much it adds to its enjoyment !

Seated by each other, and looking on the silver Arno, Godolphin and Constance, hand clasped in hand, surrendered themselves to the contemplation of their future happiness. “And what would be your favourite mode of life, dear Percy?”

“Why, I have now no schemings left me, Constance. With you obtained, I have grown a dullard, and left off dreaming. But let me see; a house in England—you like England—some ten or twenty miles from the great Babel: books, pictures, statues, and old trees that shall put us in mind of our Norman fathers who planted them; above all, a noisy, clear, sunny stream gliding amidst them—deer on the opposite bank, half hidden amongst the fern; and rooks over head: a privilege for eccentricity that would allow one to be social or solitary as one pleased; and a house so full of guests,

that to shun them *all* now and then would be no affront to *one*."

"Well," said Constance smiling, "go on."

"I have finished."

"Finished?"

"Yes, my fair Insatiable! What more would you have?"

"Why, this is but a country-life you have been talking of; very well in its way for three months in the year."

"Italy then, for the other nine," returned Godolphin.

"Ah, Percy! is pleasure, mere pleasure, vulgar pleasure, to be really the sole end and aim of life?"

"Assuredly!"

"And action, enterprise — are these as nothing?"

Godolphin was silent, but began absently to

throw pebbles into the water. The action reminded Constance of the first time she had ever seen him among his ancestral groves; and she sighed as she now gazed on a brow from which the effeminacy and dreaming of his life had stricken much of its early chivalric and earnest expression.

CHAPTER V.

NEWS OF LUCILLA.

GODOLPHIN was about one morning to depart for the convent to which Lucilla had flown, when a letter was brought to him from the abbess of the convent herself; it had followed him from Rome. Lucilla had left her retreat, left it three days before Godolphin's marriage; the abbess knew not whither, but believed she intended to reside in Rome. She enclosed him a note from Lucilla, left for him before her departure. Short but characteristic; it ran thus:

LUCILLA TO GODOLPHIN.

“ I can stay here no longer ; my mind will not submit to quiet ; this inactivity wears me to madness. Besides, I want to see thy wife. I shall go to Rome ; I shall witness thy wedding ; and then — ah ! what then ? Give me back, Godolphin, oh, give me back the young pure heart I had ere I loved you. Then, I could take joy in all things :—*now* ! But I will not repine ; it is beneath me. I, the daughter of the stars, am no love-sick and nerveless minion of a vain regret ; my pride is roused at last, and I feel at least the independence of being alone. Wild and roving shall be my future life ; that lot which denies me hope, has raised me above all fear. Love makes us all the woman ; love has left me, and something hard and venturous, something that belongs to *thy* sex, has come in its stead.

“ You have left me money—I thank you—

I thank you—I thank you; my heart almost chokes me as I write this. Could you think of me so basely?—For shame, man! if my child—*our* child were living, (and oh, Percy, she had thine eyes!) I would see her starve inch by inch rather than touch one doit of thy *bounty*. But she is dead—thank God! Fear not for me, I shall not starve; these hands can support life. God bless thee—loved as thou still art! If, years hence, I should feel my end draw near, I will drag myself to thy country, and look once more on thy face before I die.”

Godolphin sunk down, and covered his face with his hands. Constance took up the letter. “Ay—read it!” said he in a hollow voice. She did so, and when she had finished, the proud Constance, struck by a spirit like her own, bathed the letter in her tears. This pleased—this touched—this consoled Godolphin more than the most elaborate comfortings.

“Poor girl!” said Constance through her tears, “this must not be; she must not be left on the wide world to her own despairing heart. Let us both go to Rome, and seek her out. *I* will persuade her to accept what she refuses from you.”

Godolphin pressed his wife's hand, but spoke not. They went that day to Rome. Lucilla had departed for Leghorn, and thence taken her passage in a vessel bound to the northern coasts of Europe. Perhaps she had sought her father's land? With that hope, in the absence of all others, they attempted to console themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH TWO PERSONS, PERMANENTLY UNITED, DISCOVER THAT NO TIE CAN PRODUCE UNION OF MINDS.

WEEKS passed on, and, apparently, Godolphin had reconciled himself to the disappearance and precarious destiny of Lucilla. It was not in his calm and brooding nature to show much of emotion ; but there was often, even in the presence of Constance, a cloud on his brow, and the fits of abstraction to which he had always been accustomed grew upon him more frequently than ever. Constance had been inured for years to the most assiduous, the

most devoted attentions ; and now, living much alone with Godolphin, she began somewhat to miss them ; for Godolphin could be a passionate, a romantic, but he could not be a very watchful lover. He had no *petits soins*. Few husbands have, it is true ; nor is it necessary for husbands in general. But Constance was not an ordinary woman ; she loved deeply, but she loved according to her nature—as a woman proud and exacting must love. For Godolphin, her haughty step waxed timorous and vigilant ; she always sprang forward the first to meet him on his return from his solitary ramblings, and he smiled upon her with his wonted gentleness—but not so gratefully, thought Constance, as he ought. In truth, he had been too much accustomed to the eager love of Lucilla to feel greatly surprised at any proof of tenderness from Constance. Thus, too proud to speak—to hint a complaint, Con-

stance was nevertheless perpetually wounded, and by degrees (although not loving her husband less) she taught that love to be more concealed. Oh, that accursed secretiveness in women, which makes them always belie themselves !

Godolphin, too, was not without *his* disappointments. There was something so bright, so purely intellectual, about Constance's character, that at times, when brought into constant intercourse with her, you longed for some human weakness — some wild, warm error on which to repose. Dazzling and fair as snow, like snow, your eye ached to gaze upon her. She had, during the years of her ungenial marriage, cultivated her mind to the utmost ; few women were so accomplished — it might be, learned : her conversation flowed for ever in the same bright, flowery, adorned stream. There were times when Godolphin recollected how

hard it is to read a volume of that Gibbon who in a page is so delightful. Her affection for him was intense, high, devoted; but it was wholly of the same intellectual, spiritualized order; it seemed to Godolphin to want human warmth and fondness. In fact, there never was a woman who, both by original nature and after habits, was so purely and abstractedly "mind" as was Constance; there was not a single trait or taste in her character, that a sensualist could have sneered at. Her heart was wholly Godolphin's; her mind was generous, sympathizing, lofty; her person unrivalled in the majesty of its loveliness; all these, too, were Godolphin's, and yet the eternal something was wanting still.

"I have brought you your hat, Percy," said Constance; "you forget the dews are falling fast, and your head is uncovered."

"Thank you," said Percy, gently (yet Constance thought the tone might have been

warmer.) “How beautiful is this hour! Look yonder, the sun’s ray still upon those immortal hills—that lone grey tower amongst the far plains—the pines around—hearken to their sighing! These are indeed the scenes of the Dryad and the Faun. These are scenes where we could melt our whole nature down to love; Nature never meant us for the stern and arid destinies we fulfil. Look round, Constance, in every leaf of her gorgeous book, how glowingly is written the one sentence, ‘LOVE, AND BE HAPPY!’ You answer not; to these thoughts you are cold.”

“They breathe too much of the Epicurean and his rose-leaves for me,” answered Constance, smilingly; “I love better that stern old tower, telling of glorious strife and great deeds, than all the *softer* landscape, on which the present debasement of the south seems written.”

“You and your English,” said Godolphin,

somewhat bitterly, “prate of the debasement of my poor Italians in a jargon that I confess almost enrages me. (Constance coloured and bit her lips.) Debasement! why debasement? They enjoy themselves; they take from life its just moral; they do not affect the more violent crimes; they feel their mortality, follow its common ends, are frivolous, contented, and die! Well; this is debasement.—Be it so. But for what would you exchange it? The hard, cold, ferocious guilt of ancient Rome; the detestable hypocrisy, the secret villainy, fraud, murder, that stamped republican Venice? The days of glory that you lament are the days of the darkest guilt, and man shudders when he reads what the fair moralizers over the soft and idle Italy, sigh to recall!”

“You are severe,” said Constance with a pained voice.

“Forgive me, dearest, but you are often severe on *my* feelings.”

Constance was silent; the magic of the sunset was gone; they walked back to the house, chilled, and somewhat cooled towards each other.

Another day, on which the rain forbade them to stir from home, Godolphin, after he had remained long silent and meditating, said to Constance, who was busy writing letters to her political friends, in which, avoiding Italy and love, the scheming Countess dwelt only on busy England and its eternal politics,

“Will you read to me, dear Constance? my spirits are sad to-day! the weather affects them!”

Constance laid aside her letters, and took up one of the many books that strewed the table: it was a volume of one of our most popular poets.

“ I hate poetry,” said Godolphin, languidly.

“ Here is Machiavel’s history of the Prince of Lucca,” said Constance, quickly.

“ Ah, read that, and see how odious is ambition,” returned Godolphin.

And Constance read, but she warmed at what Godolphin’s lip curled with disdain. The sentiments, however, drew him from his apathy : and presently, with the eloquence he could command when once excited, he poured forth the doctrines of his peculiar philosophy. Constance listened, delighted and absorbed ; she did not sympathize with the thought, but she was struck with the genius which clothed it.

“ Ah !” said she, with enthusiasm, “ why should those brilliant words be thus spoken and lost for ever ? Why not stamp them on the living page, or why not invest them

in the oratory that would render *you* illustrious and *them* immortal."

"Excellent !" said Godolphin, laughing :
"the House of Commons would sympathize with philosophy warmly !"

Yet Constance was right on the whole. But the curse of a life of pleasure is, its aversion to useful activity. Talk of the genius that lies crushed and obscure in poverty ! Wealth and station have also their mute Miltons and inglorious Hampdens. Alas ! how much of deep and true wisdom do we meet among the triflers of the world ; how much that in the stern middle walks of life would have obtained renown, in the withering and relaxed air of loftier rank, dies away unheeded ! The two extremes meet in this,—the destruction of mental gifts. Godolphin was one among many instances of the evil influence an indolent aristocracy creates, even for its favourites. But

the world is progressing to that state in which the two antagonist classes must cease. In America they have ceased already; but in America there are yet wanted what philosophy, the arts, and literature, must ultimately teach and diffuse—the refinement which softens equality, and the high moral tone which counterbalances the huckstering spirit that belongs to commerce.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETURN TO LONDON—THE ETERNAL NATURE OF
DISAPPOINTMENT—FANNY MILLINGER—HER HOUSE
AND SUPPER.

IT was in the midst of spring, and at the approach of night, that our travellers entered London. After an absence of some duration there is a singular emotion on returning to the roar and tumult of that vast city. Its bustle, its life, its wealth—the tokens of the ambition and commerce of the great Island Race—have something of inconceivable excitement and power, after the comparative de-

sertion and majestic stillness of Continental cities. Constance leant restlessly forth from the window of the carriage as it whirled on.

“ Oh, that I were a man !” said she, fervently.

“ And why ?” asked Godolphin, smilingly.

“ Why ! Look out on this broad theatre of universal ambition, and read the why. What a proud and various career lies open in this free city to every citizen ! Look, look yonder — the old hereditary senate, still eloquent with high memories.”

“ And close by it,” said Godolphin, sneering, “ behold the tomb !”

“ Yes, but the tomb of great men !” said Constance, eagerly.

“ The victims of their greatness.”

There was a pause ; Constance would not reply, she would scarcely listen.

“ And do you feel no excitement, Percy,

in the hum and bustle—the lights, the pomp of your native city ?”

“ Yes ; I am in the mart where all enjoyment may be purchased.”

“ Ah, fie !”

Godolphin drew his cloak round him, and put up the window. “ These cursed east winds !”

Very true — they *are* the curse of the country.

The carriage stopped at the stately portico of Erpingham House. Godolphin felt a little humiliated at being indebted to another — to a woman, for so splendid a tenement ; but Constance, not penetrating into this sentiment, hastened up the broad stairs, and said, pointing to a door that led to her boudoir,

“ In that room cabinets have been formed and shaken.”

Godolphin laughed ; he was alive only to

the vanity of the boast, because he shared not the enthusiasm ; this was Constance's weak point :—her dark eye flashed fire.

There's nothing bores a man more than the sort of uneasy quiet that follows a day's journey. Godolphin took his hat, and yawningly stretching himself, nodded to Constance, and moved to the door ; they were in her dressing-room at the time.

“ Why, what, Percy, you cannot be going out now !”

“ Indeed I am, my love.”

“ Where, in Heaven's name ?”

“ To White's, to learn the news of the Opera, and the strength of the Ballet.”

“ I had just rung for lights, to show you the house !” said Constance, disappointed and half reproachfully.

“ Mercy, Constance ! damp rooms and east winds together, are too much. House indeed !

what can there be worth seeing in your English drawing-rooms, after the marble palaces of Italy? Any commands?"

"None!" said Constance, sinking back into her chair, with the tears in her eyes. Godolphin did not perceive them; he was only displeased by the cold tone of her answer, and he shut the door, muttering to himself—"Was there ever such indelicate ostentation!"

"And thus," said Constance, bitterly, "I return to England; friendless, unloved, solitary in my schemes and my heart, as I was before. Awake, my soul! *thou* art my sole strength, my sole support. Weak, weak that I was, to love this man despite of—Well, well, I am not sunk so low as to regret."

So saying, she wiped away a few tears, and turning with a strong effort from softer thoughts, leant her cheek on her hand, and gazing on the fire, surrendered herself to the

sterner and more plotting meditations which her return to the circle of her old ambition had at first called forth.

Meanwhile Godolphin sauntered into the then arch-club of St. James's, that reservoir of idle exquisites, and kid-gloved politicians. There are two classes of popular men in London; the sprightly, joyous, good-humoured set; the quiet, gentle, sarcastic herd. The one are fellows called devilish good—the other, fellows called devilish gentleman-like. To the latter class belonged Godolphin. As he had never written a book, nor set up for a genius, his cleverness was tacitly allowed no impediment to his good qualities. Nothing atones for the sin, in the eyes of those young gentlemen who create for their contemporaries reputation, of having in any way distinguished oneself. “He’s such a damned bore, that man with his books and poetry,” said an arch dandy of

Byron, just after "Childe Harold" had turned the heads of the women. There happened to be a knot assembled at White's when Godolphin entered; they welcomed him affectionately.

"Wish you joy, old fellow," said one. "Bless me, Godolphin! well, I am delighted to see you," cried another. "So, you have monopolized Lady Erpingham—lucky dog!" cried a third. "Oh, Godolphin," whispered a fourth, "we sup at the little actress's, *the Millinger*; you remember the Millinger? You must come; you are an old favourite, you know, she'll be so glad to see you,—all innocent: by the way Lady Erpingham need not be jealous—(jealous! Constance jealous of Fanny Millinger!) all innocent. Come, I'll drive you there; my cab's at the door."

'Anything better than a lecture on ambi-

tion,' thought Godolphin ; and, his spirits roused by the welcome he met, he consented. Godolphin's friend was a lively young nobleman, of that good-natured, easy, uncaptious temper which a clever, susceptible, indolent man, often likes better than comrades more intellectual, because he has not to put himself out of his way in the comradeship. Lord Jocelyn rattled on, as they drove along the brilliant streets, through a thousand topics, of which Godolphin heard as much as he pleased ; and Jocelyn was of that age and those spirits, when a listener may be easily dispensed with.

They arrived at a little villa at Brompton : there was a little garden round it, and a little bower in one corner, all kept excessively neat ; and the house had just been painted white from top to bottom ; and there was a verandah round it ; and the windows were plate-

glass, with mahogany sashes—only, here and there, a Gothic casement was stuck in by way of looking “tasty ;” and through one window on the ground-floor, the lights, shining within, showed crimson silk and gilded chairs, and all sorts of finery—Louis Quatorze in a nutshell ! The reader knows the sort of house as well as if he had lived in it. Ladies of Fanny Millinger’s profession and turn of mind always choose the same kind of habitation. It is astonishing what an unanimity of taste they have ; and young men about town call it “taste” too, and imitate the fashion in their own little *tusculums* in Chapel Street.

After having threaded a Gothic hall four feet by eight, and an oval conservatory with a river-god in the middle, the two visitors found themselves in the presence of Fanny Millinger.

Godolphin had certainly felt no small curiosity to see again the frank, fair, laughing face which had shone on his boyhood, and his mind ran busily back to that summer evening when, with a pulse how different from its present languid tenour, and a heart burning with ardour and the pride of novel independence, the young adventurer first sallied on the world. He drew back involuntarily as he now gazed on the actress: she had kept the promise of her youth, and grown round and full in her proportions. She was extravagantly dressed, but not with an ungraceful, although a theatrical choice: her fair hands and arms were covered with jewels, and that indescribable air which betrays the stage was far more visibly marked in her deportment than when Godolphin first knew her; yet still there was the same freedom as of old, the same joyousness, and good-humoured carelessness in

her manner, and in the silver ring of her voice, as she greeted Jocelyn, and turned to question him as to his friend. Godolphin dropped his cloak, and the next moment, with a pretty scream, quite stage-effect, and yet quite natural, the actress had thrown herself into his arms.

“ Oh ! but I forgot,” said she presently, with a mock salutation of respect, “ you are married now ; there will be no more cakes and ale. Ah ! what long years since we met ; yet I have never quite forgotten you, although the stage requires all one’s memory for one’s new parts. Alas ! your hair—it *was* so beautiful—it has lost half its curl, and grown thin. Very rude in me to say so, but I always speak the truth, and my heart warms to see you, so all its thoughts thaw out.”

“ Well,” said Lord Jocelyn, who had been playing with a little muffy sort of dog, “ you ’ll recollect *me* presently.”

“ You ! Oh, one never thinks of you, except when you speak, and then one recollects you—to look at the clock.”

“ Very good, Fanny — very good, Fan : and when do you expect Windsor ? — He ought to be here soon. Tell me, do you like him really ?”

“ *Like* him ?—yes, excessively ; just the word for him—for you all. If *love* were thrown into the stream of life, my little sail would be upset in an instant. But in truth, what with dressing, and playing, and all the grave business of life, I am not idle enough to love. And oh, Godolphin, I’m so improved ! ask Lord Jocelyn, if I don’t sing like an angel, although my voice is hardly strong enough to go round a loo-table ; but on the stage, one learns to dispense with all qualities. It is a curious thing, that fictitious existence, side by side with the real one ! We live in enchantment, Percy, and enjoy what the poets pretend to.”

The dreaming Godolphin was struck by the remark. He was surprised, also, to see how much his Fanny remained the same. A life of gaiety had not debased her, and principally because she had never known any other life. She could never be said to have fallen; it is the consciousness of degradation that degrades us. Nell Gwynne lived in vice, but was scarcely vicious. All this I touch on, and introduce, because society can reform its own anomalies, if we are bold enough to paint them.

Tom Windsor came next, an Irishman of five-and-forty, not like his countrymen in aught save wit. Thin, small, shrivelled, but up to his ears in knowledge of the world, and with a jest for ever on his tongue; rich and gay,—he was always popular, and he made the most of this little life without being an absolute rascal. Next dropped in, the handsome Frenchman, D'Aubrey; next, the young gambler St. John;

next, two ladies, both actresses, and the party was complete.

The supper was like the house, very fine, and suited to the tastes of the palace ; the best wines, excellent viands—the actress had grown rich. Wit, noise, good-humour, anecdote, flashed round with the champagne ; and Godolphin, exhilarated into a second youth, fancied himself once more the votary of pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII.

GODOLPHIN'S SOLILOQUY.—HE BECOMES A MAN OF PLEASURE AND A PATRON OF THE ARTS.—TWO NEW CHARACTERS SHADOWED FORTH; FOR AS WE PROGRESS, WHETHER IN LIFE OR ITS REPRESENTATION, CHARACTERS ARE MORE FAINT AND DIMLY DRAWN THAN IN THE EARLIER PART OF OUR CAREER.—CONVERSATION BETWEEN RADCLYFFE AND CONSTANCE.—GUESSES INTO THE POLITICAL FUTURE.—THE WIT OF ABSTRACTION.

“YES,” said Godolphin, the next morning, as he soliloquized over his lonely breakfast-table—lonely, for the hours of the restless Constance were not those of the luxurious and indolent Godolphin, and she was already in her carriage—nay, already closeted with an in-

triguing ambassadress : — “ Yes ; I have passed two eras of life — the first of romance, the second of contemplation ; once my favourite study was poetry — next philosophy. Now, returned to my native country, rich, settled, yet young, new objects arise to me ; not that vulgar and troublous ambition (that is to make a toil of life) which Constance suggests, but a more warm and vivid existence than that I have lately dreamed away. Let luxury and pleasure now be to me what solitude and thought were. I have been too long the solitary, I will learn to be social.”

Agreeably to this resolution, Godolphin returned with avidity to the enjoyment of the world ; he found himself courted, he courted society in return. Erpingham House had been for years the scene of fascination ; who does not recollect the yet greater refinement which its new lord threw over its circles ? A de-

licate and just conception of the fine arts had always characterized Godolphin. He now formed that ardour for collecting, common to the more elegant order of minds. From his beloved Italy he imported the most beautiful statues — his cabinets were filled with gems—his walls glowed with the triumphs of the canvass—the showy but heterogeneous furniture of Erpingham House gave way to a more classic and perfect taste. The same fastidiousness which, in the affairs of the heart, had characterized Godolphin's habits and sentiments — characterized his new pursuits; the same thirst for the ideal, the same worship of the beautiful, and aspirations after the perfect.

It was not in Constance's nature to admit this smaller ambition; her taste was pure but not minute; she did not descend to the philosophy of detail. But she was glad still to see

that Godolphin could be aroused to the discovery of an active object; and, although she sighed to perceive his fine genius frittered away on the trifles of the virtuoso — although she secretly regretted the waste of her great wealth (which afforded to political ambition so high an advantage) on the mute marble, and what she deemed not unjustly frivolous curiosities — she still never interfered with Godolphin's caprices, conscious that, to his delicacy, a single objection to his wishes on the score of expense would have reminded him of what she wished him most to forget—viz. that the means of this lavish expenditure were derived from her. She hoped that his mind, once fairly awakened, would soon grow sated with the acquisition of baubles, and at length sigh for loftier objects; and, in the mean while, she plunged into her old party plots and ambitious intrigues.

Erpingham House, celebrated as ever for the beauty of its queen, and for the political nature of its entertainments, received a new celebrity from its treasures of art, and the spiritual wit and grace with which Godolphin invested its attractions. Among the crowd of its guests, there were two whom its owners more particularly distinguished—men of a very different character, yet each typical of the society that had formed them. One was a nobleman of great wealth, and known much for his talents, more for his eccentricities. Lord Saltream was an only son; his father, a little good-natured man, in the common acceptation of the word, had been very fond of music, and not at all fond of his heir—in plain language, he had, from some cause or other, conceived a most unconquerable aversion to the present lord, which lasted during the whole life of the former. The poor nobleman had not been much

more fortunate in his other parent : a coarse, rude, vulgar woman, with the face of a kitchen-maid, and the soul of a cook. Early in life, the neglected boy had testified the promise of great talents ; but whether or not he had been soured by domestic circumstances, he testified also a shrewd, biting, morbid disposition. He distinguished himself in public life, although he wanted readiness and presence of mind ; and had filled, if not with glory, at least with credit, one of those offices of state in this freest of all free countries, which are generally at the command of any Earl's son who can read and write decently, eschew too vehement a radicalism, and who thinks fit to demand the laborious honour. Having now succeeded to the large estates which were his patrimony, Lord Saltream was out of office, and amused himself with building houses and giving splendid entertainments, at which the host was the only one permitted

to be bored. He was a man of extensive reading, and even (compared with the lore of the witlings of the world) erudition; and although subject to the most extraordinary fits of absence, no man could be more agreeable when he pleased it. But his eccentricity made his chief faculty of entertaining; he cherished a habit of speaking his thoughts aloud, as if in the Palace of Truth, and would sometimes astonish a courtier, just presented to him, by the most artless confession of his disgust at the presentee. Whether this habit was altogether unconscious, or whether a certain disposition to sarcasm did not also mingle with it, I, for one, will not venture to determine; it was generally asserted by those who ought best to know, that his lordship was wholly ignorant of the inconvenient loquacity of his opinions.

The guest next familiar at Erpingham

House, was the younger son of an ancient and wealthy house, that having enjoyed old titles, disdained new ones. Stainforth Radclyffe was still considerably under thirty, but already a distinguished man. At school he had been distinguished, at college distinguished, and now in the world of science distinguished also. Beneath a quiet, soft, and cold exterior, he concealed the most resolute and ceaseless ambition; and this ambition was the governing faculty of his soul. His energies were unfrittered by small objects; for he went little into society, and he sought in his studies especially, those pursuits which nerve and brace the mind. He was a profound thinker, a deep political economist, an accurate financier, a judge of the intricacies of morals and legislation—for to his mere book-studies he added an instinctive penetration into men; and when from time to time he rejoined the

world, he sought out those most distinguished in the sciences he had cultivated, and by their lights corrected his own. In him there was nothing desultory, or undetermined; his conduct was perpetual calculation. He did nothing but with an eye to a final object; and when, to the superficial, he seemed most to wander from the road their prudence would have suggested, he was only seeking the surest and shortest paths. Yet his ambition was not the mere vulgar thirst for getting on in the world; he cared little for the paltry place, the petty power, which may reward what are called aspiring young men. His clear sight penetrated to objects that seemed wrapped in shade to all others; and to those only,—distant, but vast and towering, he deigned to attach his desires. He cared not for small and momentary rewards; and while always (for he knew its necessity) uppermost on the tide of the

hour, he had neither joy nor thought for the petty honours for which he was envied, and by which he was supposed to be elated. Always occupied, and always thoughtful, he went, as I have just said, very little into the gay world, and was not very well formed to shine in it when there ; for trifles require the whole man as much as matters of importance. He did not want either wit or polish, but he tasked his powers too severely on great subjects not to be sometimes dull upon small ones ; yet, when he was either excited or at home, he was not without — what man of genius is ? — his peculiar powers of conversation. There was in this young, dark, brooding, stern man, that which had charmed Constance at first sight ; she thought to recognize a nature like her own, and Radclyffe's venturous spirit exulted in a commune with her's. Their politics were the same ; their ultimate end not *very*

unlike ; and their common ambition furnished them with an eternity of topics and schemes. Radclyffe was Constance's guest ; — Saltream, Godolphin's ; — but Godolphin soon grew attached to the young politician, and Constance was not without interest for the singular noble.

“ You see,” said Constance, one day, when Radclyffe was paying her a morning visit, “ you see that, despite the stern and arrogant policy of the day, although we have a Sidmouth and a Castlereagh in power, yet it is impossible not to note that ripening spirit towards freer institutions which, now that the summer of peace is fairly set, will have leisure to make itself felt. From the large towns, as yet unrepresented, and therefore discontented, there must rise that source of democratic opinion which will bear down all these venerable but decayed abuses which are opposed as barriers to the popular tide.”

“ Who knows,” said Radclyffe, smiling, “ but what even Radicalism may realize its visions? Seriously, however, I confess that I see no hope for the Whigs; indolent and aristocratic, they would offend their followers by their want of energy, and the people by their want of truth.”*

“ As to that,” said Constance, more carelessly than her Whig friends would altogether have liked, “ no matter who are the agents, so that the principle come into play. The first effect of liberal opinions is this,” continued the fair politician, profoundly; “ they force themselves on the *illiberal* party; the anti-innovators, impelled by the weight of public opinion, commit the first innovation; then the strength of their party is gone! Di-

* The Whigs have since then renounced their name, and their *principal* fault; they are now reformers, and their merit is reform.

vision, jealousies, creep in; the more liberal of the illiberals fall perforce on the more illiberal of the liberals for that support they have lost from their own party. This motley union cannot last long—the bond breaks—a new party comes in—not the old Tories—they have stood still, it is true, but the world has gone on and left them behind. It must be a cabinet of the yet more liberal, although, probably, patched and pieced by the party they supplant; and thus it will go on, ministry following ministry, each taking in new allies from the more popular side, and retaining old veterans from the less popular, until you find the circle will pass the Tories, pass the Moderates, pass the Whigs, and, perhaps, rest at last on the Mountain Bench.”

“Who knows,” said Radclyffe, “but what, if your prophecy be true, we may see the fiery Brougham in office, the honest Althorp

on the Treasury-bench, and the rigid Sir Henry Parnell taking care of our purses?"

"That would be indeed beyond all apparent probability," said Constance, laughing; "but even then, if my proposition be true, (that one half of the new men will be qualified with the old,) the most singular part of the change would be not so much to see Mr. Brougham in office, as to see who would be his colleagues."

"Fancy Palmerston, or Charles Grant," said Radclyffe, laughing too.

"Nay, if the march of liberality once reached so far," said Constance, "it would never stay there. Thence it must proceed sweeping along with it into office, perhaps even the coadjutor of the bold Sir Francis, young Mr. Hobhouse himself."

This notion seemed so diverting that our politicians could not divest themselves of its

consideration they continued to dwell on it, and turn it into every possible shape, when suddenly Lord Saltream was announced.

“ I am glad to see you, Lady Erpingham,” said he, “ very ;” and then fixing his eyes on Radclyffe, he continued, muttering audibly to himself ; “ what, he’s here !—very unpleasant—I hate clever young men—shall I go away ? no, I think I’ll stay ;” so down he sat.

Radclyffe and Constance exchanged smiles, and Radclyffe moved to the window.

“ You do not know what a relief it has been to me,” said Lord Saltream, “ to build a great house. I was so overburthened with money that I could not tell what to do with myself ; there was an obvious necessity to spend it. Charity is such an ostentatious vice, I can’t say I approve of it ; I hate gambling—I have no wife to gamble for me—my wealth perfectly embarrassed me. At length, most pro-

videntially, I thought of building, and I do assure you I have got rid of my superfluities ever since ; nay, so far from not knowing what to do with my money, I have now the agreeable prospect of not being a whit richer than my neighbours. Oh, building is an excellent device for embarrassed riches ! I will recommend it to Godolphin. You see, too, that it is a national device ; the whole people overburthened, not with their taxes, as the stupid newspapers say, but with the excess of a stagnant capital, have taken to building too. Look round London ! what streets they run up — what Grecian temples in the Regent's Park — what Gothic cathedrals in Paradise Row. And see what a fine sepulchre for departed guineas they are erecting in St. James's under the nickname of a palace. Oh, believe me, Lady Erpingham, the English are a very sensible people ; what a pity they should ever

be harassed with the discontent of too much prosperity !”

“ What an ingenious way of accounting for the national grievances ! It is a pity you don’t publish it. ‘ The State of the Poor, by Lord Saltream, in two volumes quarto ;’ an essay to prove that poverty is only the inconvenience of a superabundance of wealth ; it would take prodigiously.”

“ Many thanks for the idea. I will begin it to-morrow, and dedicate it to Southey, who has a great respect for uneducated genius, and rewards a compliment to himself by a three months’ immortality in the Quarterly. But how stupid books are ! don’t they bore you exceedingly ?”

Here Lord Saltream paused for a moment, and gazing on vacancy, muttered, “ Shall I tell her that story ? Yes, I’ll tell her that story : no, I won’t ; this is beginning to get a

bore ; I wish they'd go ;" and the Earl drew his chair to the fireplace, and sank into an obstinate silence.

Time passed ; Radclyffe had gone ; Lady Erpingham's carriage waited at the door ; she had a particular engagement.

" Well, Lord Saltream, I fear I must leave you ; I am quite ashamed of deserting you—but——"

" Mention it not, dear Lady Erpingham ; I am sorry indeed to lose you, but another time I hope you will pay me a longer visit." Lord Saltream rang the bell. " Lady Erpingham's carriage—good day," and the Earl bowed Constance most politely out of her own room.

" What a strange creature !" said Lady Erpingham to herself ; " but where is Godolphin ? Alas, I never see him now !" She hurried into the carriage and drove off to the Duchess of W——. As she passed rapidly

through the Park, (for the busy Countess seldom loitered there for pleasure,) she saw Godolphin riding among a group of the dissipated wits of the day, distinguished from all by the beauty of his horse, and the pale, intellectual nobleness of his countenance. He was now putting into practice his new theory; he was trying to escape ennui, not by exertion, but by pleasure. Alas! we cannot fill the sieve by wine easier than by water. The task of the Danaides is typical of that aristocratic satiety which for ever seeks to fill a leisure incapable of occupation.

“That is a dangerous, scheming woman, believe me,” said the Duchess of W—— to her great husband, when Constance left her Grace.

“Nonsense! women are never dangerous.”

Lady Erpingham returned home, dressed for dinner: she and Godolphin dined out, — for once together. Leaning on Percy’s arm, she

descended from her boudoir into the drawing-room to wait for the carriage, and lo ! dozing on the sofa, they beheld Lord Saltream.

“Heavens, my Lord !” said Constance, astonished ; “and have you really been imprisoned here ever since I left you so unceremoniously ?”

“Ah, Lady Erpingham !” — then relapsing into *the* audible mutter, “What, come to dine with me, I suppose ; upon my word rather unexpected ; — these handsome women take such d—d liberties. Hem—(*aloud*) it’s very late : —yes ; I have not been out all day. Oh, Godolphin, I am glad to see you ; I fear you will dine but badly to-day.”

“Nay, S——’s *cuisinier* is justly celebrated,” said Godolphin, smiling.

“S——’s ! very likely. —(*mutter*) What does the man mean !—(*aloud*) So is mine ; but thus unprepared—guests so fastidious too !”

“Why, my dear Saltream,” said Godolphin, laughing, “you think you are at home.”

“Ha! upon my word!” said Lord Saltream, astonished, and after a long pause, “and so I did.”

Lord S—— gave excellent dinners. He has since been made an English peer for that great legislative talent.

There was a very agreeable party assembled at his house, but the hour of eight arrived, and dinner was not yet served; our Amphytrion grew fidgety.

“Whom do you expect?” asked Godolphin.

“Saltream.”

“Saltream!” exclaimed Godolphin.

“Saltream!” echoed Lady Erpingham.

“Saltream!” repeated Saville, “why he asked me, and a wilderness of other people, to dine with *him* to-day.”

“Lord Saltream!” said the groom of the chambers, and Lord Saltream entered. He had thrown off his fit of absence; he was de-

lightful ; he apologized for his delay in a volley of *bons mots*, and as he led Lady Erpingham into the dining-room, he paved the way with a series of epigrams.

The first course went off brilliantly ; Lord Saltream was the life of the party ; but at the second course he grew sombre, his brow knit, he looked confused, unhappy ; he coloured, he bit his lip, and at length burst out :

“ Upon my word, Lady Erpingham, I owe you many apologies ;—my Lord, (addressing the host,) pray forgive my rascal—I cannot make it out ; it’s inexplicable ; but I must apologise to you for the extreme badness of this dinner ; it ’s really quite disgraceful.”

CHAPTER IX.

GODOLPHIN'S COURSE OF LIFE—INFLUENCE OF OPINION AND OF RIDICULE ON THE MINDS OF THE PRIVILEGED ORDERS—LADY ERPINGHAM'S FRIENDSHIP WITH THE LATE KING—HIS MANNER OF LIVING.

'THE course of life which Godolphin now led, was exactly that which it is natural for a very rich intellectual man to indulge — voluptuous, but refined. He was arriving at that age when the poetry of the heart necessarily decays. Wealth almost unlimited was at his command ; he had no motive for exertion ; and he now sought in pleasure that which he had formerly

asked from romance. Despising, as we have seen, all ambition, his faculties and talents had no other circle for display than that which "society" affords; and, by slow degrees, society—its applause and its regard—became to him of greater importance than his "philosophy dreamt of." Whatever the circle we live amongst, the public opinion of that circle will, sooner or later, obtain a control over us. This is the reason why a life of pleasure makes even the strongest mind frivolous at last. The lawyer, the senator, the man of letters, all are insensibly guided—moulded—formed—by the judgment of the tribe they belong to, and the circle in which they move. Still more is it the case with the idlers of the great world, amongst whom the only main staple of talk is "themselves."

And in the last-named set, Ridicule being more strong and fearful a deity, than she is

amongst the cultivators of the graver occupations of life, reduces the inmates, by a constant dread of incurring her displeasure, to a more monotonous and regular subjection to the judgment of others. Ridicule is the stifler of all energy amongst those she controls. After a man's position in society is once established; after he has arrived at a certain age; he does not like to hazard any intellectual enterprize which may endanger the quantum of respect or popularity at present allotted to him. He does not like to risk a failure in Parliament—a caustic criticism in literature: he does not like to excite new jealousies, and provoke angry rivals where he now finds complaisant inferiors. The most admired authors, the most respected members of either House, now looked up to Godolphin as a man of wit and genius; a man whose house, whose wealth, whose wife, gave him an influence few individuals enjoy. Why

risk all this respect by provoking comparison? Among the first in one line, why sink into the probability of being second-rate in another?

This motive, which secretly governs half the Aristocracy, the cleverer half, viz. the more diffident and the more esteemed; which leaves to the obtuse and the vain, a despised and unenviable notoriety; added new force to Godolphin's philosophical indifference to ambition. Perhaps, had his situation been less brilliant, or had he persevered in that early affection for solitude which youth loves as the best nurse to its dreams, he might now, in attaining an age when ambition, often dumb before, usually begins to make itself heard, have awakened to a more resolute and aspiring temperament of mind. But, as it was, courted and surrounded by all the enjoyments which are generally the reward to which exertion looks, even an ambitious man might have forgotten

his nature. No wound to his vanity, *no feeling that he was underrated*, (that great spur to proud minds) excited him to those exertions we undertake in order to belie calumny. He was “the glass of fashion,” at once popular and admired ; and his good fortune in marrying the celebrated, the wealthy, the beautiful Countess of Erpingham was, as success always is, considered the proof of his genius, and the token of his merits.

It was certainly true, that a secret and mutual disappointment rankled beneath the brilliant lot of the husband and wife. Godolphin exacted from Constance more softness, more devotion, more compliance than belonged to her nature ; and Constance, on the other hand, ceased not to repine that she found in Godolphin no sympathy with her objects, and no feeling for her enthusiasm. As there was little congenial in their pursuits, the one living for pleasure,

the other for ambition, there could be no congeniality in their intercourse. They loved each other still; they loved each other warmly; they never quarrelled; for the temper of Constance was mild, and that of Godolphin generous: but neither believed there was much love on the other side; and both sought abroad that fellowship and those objects they had not in common at home.

Constance was a great favourite with the late King: she was constantly invited to the narrow circle of festivities at Windsor. Godolphin, who avoided *the being bored* as the greatest of earthly evils, could not bow down his tastes and habits to any exact and precise order of life, however distinguished the circle in which it became the rule. Thirsting to be amused, he could not conjugate the *active* verb “to amuse.” No man was more fitted to adorn a court, yet no man could less play the cour-

tier. He admired the manners of the sovereign,—he did homage to the natural acuteness of his understanding; but, accustomed as he was to lay down the law in society, he was too proud to receive it from another,—a common case among those who live with the great by right, and not through sufferance. His pride made him fear to seem a parasite; and, too chivalrous to be disloyal, he was too haughty to be subservient. In fact, he was thoroughly formed to be the Great Aristocrat,—a career utterly distinct from that of the Hanger-on upon a still greater man; and against his success at court, he had an obstacle no less in the inherent *fierté* of his nature, than in the acquired philosophy of his cynicism.

The King, at first, was civil enough to Lady Erpingham's husband; but he had penetration enough to see that he was not adequately ad-

mired : and on the first demonstration of royal coolness, Godolphin, glad of an excuse, forswore Castle and Pavilion for ever, and left Constance to enjoy alone the honours of the regal hospitality. The world would have insinuated scandal ; but there was that about Constance's beauty which there is said by one of the poets to belong to an Angel's — it struck the heart, but awed the senses.

CHAPTER X.

RADCLYFFE AND GODOLPHIN CONVERSE.—THE VARIETIES OF AMBITION.

“ I DON’T know,” said Godolphin to Radclyffe, as they were one day riding together among the green lanes that border the metropolis—“ I don’t know what to do with myself this evening. Lady Erpingham is gone to Windsor; I have no dinner engagement, and I am wearied of balls. Shall we dine together, and go to the play quietly, as we might have done some ten years ago?”

“ Nothing I should like better;—and the theatre—are you fond of it now? I think I

have heard you say that it once made your most favourite amusement."

"I still like it passably," answered Godolphin; "but the gloss is gone from the delusion. I am grown mournfully fastidious. I must have excellent acting—an excellent play. A slight fault—a slight deviation from nature—robs me of my content at the whole."

"The same fault in your character pervading all things," said Radclyffe, half smiling.

"True," said Godolphin, yawning;—"but have you seen my new Canova?"

"No: I care nothing for statues, and I know nothing of the Fine Arts."

"What a confession!"

"Yes, it is a rare confession: but I suspect that the Arts, like truffles and olives, are an acquired taste. People talk themselves into admiration, where at first they felt indifference. But how can you, Godolphin, with your talents, fritter away life on these baubles?"

“ You are civil,” said Godolphin impatiently. “ Allow me to tell you that it is your objects *I* consider baubles. Your dull, plodding, wearisome honours ; a name in the newspapers—a place, perhaps, in the Ministry—purchased by a sacrificed youth and a degraded manhood—a youth in labour, a manhood in schemes. No, Radclyffe ! give me the bright, the glad sparkle of existence ; and, ere the sad years of age and sickness, let me at least *enjoy*. That is wisdom ! *Your* creed is——But I will not imitate your rudeness !” and Godolphin laughed.

“ Certainly,” replied Radclyffe, “ you do your best to enjoy yourself. You live well, and fare sumptuously : your house is superb, your villa enchanting. Lady Erpingham is the handsomest woman of her time : and, as if that were not enough, half the fine women in London admit you at their feet. Yet you are not happy.”

“ Ay : but who is ? ” cried Godolphin, energetically.

“ I am,” said Radclyffe, drily.

“ You !—humph ! ”

“ You disbelieve me.”

“ I have no right to do so : but are you not ambitious ? And is not ambition full of anxiety, care,—mortification at defeat, disappointment in success ? Does not the very word ambition—that is, a desire to be something you are not—prove you discontented with what you are ? ”

“ You speak of a vulgar ambition,” said Radclyffe.

“ Most august sage !—and what species of ambition is yours ? ”

“ Not that which you describe. You speak of the ambition for self : my ambition is singular — it is the ambition for others. Some years ago, I chanced to form an object in what I considered the welfare of my race. You

smile. Nay, I boast no virtue in my dream ; but philanthropy was my hobby as statues may be yours. To effect this object, I see great changes are necessary : I desire, I work for these great changes. I am not blind, in the mean while, to glory. I desire, on the contrary, to obtain it ; but it would only please me if it came from certain sources. I want to feel that I may realise what I attempt ; and wish for that glory that comes from the permanent gratitude of my species, not that which springs from their momentary applause. Now, I am vain, very vain : vanity was, some years ago, the strongest characteristic of my nature. I do not pretend to conquer the weakness, but to turn it towards my purposes. I am vain enough to wish to shine, but the light must come from deeds I think really worthy."

" Well, well !" said Godolphin, a little interested in spite of himself ; " but ambition of

one sort resembles ambition of another, inas-
much as it involves perpetual harassments and
humiliations."

"Not so," answered Radclyffe;—"because
when a man is striving for what he fancies a
laudable object, the goodness of his intentions
comforts him for a failure in success, whereas
your selfishly ambitious man has no consolation
in *his* defeats; he is humbled by the external
world, and has no inner world to apply to for
consolation."

"Oh man!" said Godolphin, almost bitterly,
"how dost thou eternally deceive thyself!
Here is the thirst for power, and it calls itself
the love of mankind."

"*Believe me,*" said Radclyffe, so earnestly,
and with so deep a meaning in his grave, bright
eye, that Godolphin was staggered from his
scepticism;—"believe me, they may be distinct
passions, and yet can be united."

CHAPTER XI.

FANNY BEHIND THE SCENES. — REMINISCENCES OF YOUTH. — THE UNIVERSALITY OF TRICK. — THE SUPPER AT FANNY MILLINGER'S. — TALK ON A THOUSAND MATTERS, EQUALLY LIGHT AND TRUE. — FANNY'S SONG.

THE play was "Pizarro," and Fanny Millinger acted *Cora*. Godolphin and Radclyffe went behind the scenes.

"Ah!" said Fanny, as she stood in her white, Peruvian dress, waiting her turn to re-enter the stage,—"Ah, Godolphin! this reminds me of old times. How many years have passed since you used to take such pleasure in this mimic life! Well do I remember your musing eye and thoughtful brow bent

kindly on me from the stage-box yonder : and do you recollect how prettily you used to moralize on the deserted scenes when the play was over? And you sometimes waited on these very boards to escort me home. Those times have changed. Heigho !”

“ Ay, Fanny, we have passed through new worlds of feeling since then. Could life be to us now what it was at that time, we should love each other anew : but tell me, Fanny, has not the experience of life made you a wiser woman? Do you not seek more to enjoy the present—to pluck Time’s fruit on the bough, ere yet the ripeness is gone? I do. I dreamt away my youth—I strive to enjoy my manhood.”

“ Then,” said Fanny, with that quickness with which, in matters of the heart, women beat all our philosophy — “ then I can prophesy that, since we parted, you have loved or lost some one. Regret, which converts the

active mind into the dreaming temper, makes the dreamer hurry into activity, whether of business or of pleasure."

"Right," said Radclyffe, as a shade darkened his stern brow.

"Right," said Godolphin thoughtfully, and Lucilla's image smote his heart like an avenging conscience. "Right," repeated he, turning aside and soliloquizing; "and those words from an idle tongue have taught me some of the motives of my present conduct. But away reflection! I have resolved to forswear it. My pretty Cora!" said he aloud, as he turned back to the actress, "you are a very De Stael in your wisdom: but let us not be wise; 'tis the worst of our follies. Do you not give us one of your charming suppers to-night?"

"To be sure: your friend will join us. He was once the gayest of the gay; but years and fame have altered him a little."

“Radclyffe gay ! Bah !” said Godolphin, surprised.

“Ay, you may well look astonished,” said Fanny, archly : “but note that smile—it tells of old days.”

And Godolphin, turning to his friend, saw indeed on the thin lip of that earnest face a smile so buoyant, so joyous, that it seemed as if the whole character of the man were gone : but while he gazed, the smile vanished, and Radclyffe gravely declined the invitation.

Cora was now on the stage : a transport of applause shook the house.

“How well she acts !” said Radclyffe warmly.

“Yes,” answered Godolphin, as with folded arms he looked quietly on : “but what a lesson in the human heart does good acting teach us. Mark that glancing eye—that heav-

ing breast—that burst of passion—that agonized voice: the spectators are in tears! The woman's whole soul is in her child! not a bit of it! She feels no more than the boards we tread on: she is probably thinking of the lively supper we shall have; and when she comes off the stage, she will cry, “Did not I *act* it well?”

“Nay,” said Radclyffe, “she probably feels while she depicts the feeling.”

“Not she: years ago she told me the whole science of acting was trick; and trick—trick—trick it is, on the stage or off. The noble art of oratory—(noble forsooth!)—is just the same: philosophy, poetry—all, all hypocrisy. ‘Damn the moon!’ said Byron to me, as we once stood gazing on it at Venice; ‘it always gives me the ague: but I have described it well in my poetry, Godolphin—eh?’”

“But”—began Radclyffe.

“But me no buts,” interrupted Godolphin, with the playful pertinacity which he made so graceful: “you are younger than I am; when you have lived as long, you shall have a right to contradict my morality—not before.”

Godolphin’s carriage took the actress home. Like Godolphin’s, Fanny’s life was the pursuit of pleasure: she lavished on it the same cost and expense, though she wanted the same taste and refinement. Generous and profuse, like all her tribe—like all persons who win money easily—she was charitable to all and luxurious in herself. The supper was attended by four male guests—Godolphin, Saville, Lord Jocelyn, and Lord Saltream. It was one of the peculiarities of the last-named personage to seek occasionally these scenes of amusement, in which, however, he appeared to find no pleasure.

It was early summer : the curtains were undrawn, the windows half opened, and the moonlight slept on the little grass-plat that surrounded the house. The guests were in high spirits. " Fill me this goblet," cried Godolphin ; " champagne is the boy's liquor ; I will return to it *con amore*. Fanny, let us pledge each other : stay : a toast!—What shall it be ?"

" Hope, till old age, and Memory afterwards," said Fanny, smiling.

" Psha ! theatricals still, Fan ?" growled Saville, who had placed a large skreen between himself and the window ; " no sentiment between friends."

" Out on you, Saville," said Godolphin ; " as well might you say no music out of the opera ; these verbal prettinesses colour conversation. But you *roués* are so damned prosaic ; you want us to walk to Vice without a flower by the way."

“Vice indeed!” cried Saville. “I abjure your villainous appellatives. It was in your companionship that I lost my character, and now you turn king’s evidence against the poor devil you seduced.”

“Humph!” cried Godolphin, gaily; “you remind me of the advice of the Spanish hidalgo to a servant: always choose a master with a good memory: for ‘if he does not pay, he will at least remember that he owes you.’ In future, I shall take care to herd only with those who recollect, after they are finally debauched, all the good advice I gave them beforehand.”

“Meanwhile,” said the pretty Fanny, with her arch mouth half full of chicken, “I shall recollect that Mr. Saville drinks his wine without toasts—as being an useless delay.”

“Wine——” said Lord Saltream, first to himself and then aloud.

“Hush!” whispered Fanny, “Lord Salt-

ream has finished the rehearsal, and is now coming on the stage."

"Wine is just the reverse of love. Your old toppers are all for coming at once to the bottle, and your old lovers for ever mumbling the toast."

"See what you have brought yourself into, Saville, by affecting a joke upon me," said Godolphin: "Come, let us make it up: we fell out with the toast—let us be reconciled by the glass.—Champagne?"

"Ay, anything for a quiet life,—even champagne," said Saville, with a mock air of patience, and dropping his sharp features into a state of the most placid repose. "You wits are so very severe. Yes, champagne if you please. Fanny, my love," and Saville made a wry face as he put down the scarce-tasted glass, "go on—another joke, if you please; I now find I can bear your satire better at least than your wine."

Fanny was all bustle: it is in these things that the actress differs from the lady—there is no quiet in her. “Another bottle of champagne:—what can have happened to this?” Poor Fanny was absolutely pained. Saville enjoyed it, for he always revenged a jest by an impertinence.

“Nay,” said Godolphin, “our friend does but joke. Your champagne is excellent, Fanny. Well, Saville, and where is young Greenhough? He is vanished. Report says he was marked down in your company, and has not risen since.”

“Report is the civilest jade in the world. According to her, all the pigeons disappear in my fields. But, seriously speaking, Greenhough is off—gone to America—over head and ears in debt—debts of honour. Now,” said Saville very slowly, “there’s the difference between the gentleman and the *parvenu*: the

gentleman, when all is lost, cuts his throat : the *parvenu* only cuts his creditors. I am really very angry with Greenhough that he did not destroy himself. A young man under my protection, and all : so d—d ungrateful in him.”

“He was not much in your debt, eh ?” said Lord Jocelyn, speaking for the first time as the wine began to get into his head.

Saville looked hard at the speaker.

“Lord Jocelyn, a pinch of snuff : there is something singularly happy in your question ; so much to the point : you have great knowledge of the world—great. He was very much in my debt. I introduced the vulgar dog into the world, and he owes me all the thousands he had the honour to lose in good society.”

“Do you know,” said Godolphin, after he had composed himself from the laugh the announcement of this obligation occasioned, “do

you know, that I sometimes think Lady Erpingham's right—"

"That's very odd," interrupted Saville, drily.

"When she says," continued Godolphin, not seeming to heed the interruption, "that the vein of talking belonging to you and your set goes much further towards producing that revolution against the aristocracy which she predicts, than your philosophy fancies. And it is true enough, that the same love of agreeable insolence engendered that deep hate against the nobility of France which helped to destroy them."

Saville put down the glass of madeira and water he was conveying to his mouth, and mused for a moment.

"True, very true," said he; "but I'm fifty-eight; it can't happen in my time."

"I say," cried Lord Jocelyn across the table, "I say, that's a damned sensible remark of yours, Godolphin."

“Enviably approbation !” said Saville solemnly ; “ oh rare young man !”

“ And I think,” pursued Jocelyn, “ that those ‘ fashionable novels,’ as they are called, do us a devilish deal of mischief—make us seem quite unamiable and heartless. I declare I think almost ill of society, after having read one of those books.”

“ A second Timon !” said Saville :—“ Fanny, my dear, you seem silenced. For heaven’s sake stop this moralizing. Lord Jocelyn is too deep for a supper-party. He should be taken of a morning. Fan, do you ever feel repentance ?”

“ Occasionally—of some of my *invitations*,” retorted Fanny, very briskly.

“ Excellent ! how severe on Godolphin. Do you know, Percy, by the way, that my poor dear friend Jasmin is dead ? died after a hearty game of whist. He had just time to cry ‘ four by honours,’ when death *trumped*

him. It was a great shock to me: he was the second best player at Graham's. Those sudden deaths are very awful,—especially with the game in one's hands."

"Very mortifying indeed," seriously said Lord Jocelyn, who had just been initiated into whist.

"'Tis droll," said Saville, "to see how often the last words of a man tally with his life; 'tis like the moral to the fable. The best instance I know is in Lord Chesterfield, whose fine soul went out in that sublime and inimitable sentence—'Give Darrell a chair.'"

"Capital!" cried Jocelyn. "Saville, a game at *écarté*."

As the lion in the Tower looked at the lap-dog, in all the compassion of contempt, looked Saville on Jocelyn.

"*Infelix puer!*" muttered Lord Saltream,
"*Infelix puer et impar congressus Achilli.*"

“With all my heart,” said Saville at last. “Yet, no—we’ve been talking of death—such topics waken a man’s conscience. Lord Jocelyn, I never play for less than——”

“Ponies!—I know it!” cried Jocelyn triumphantly.

“Ponies—less than chargers.”

“Chargers—what are chargers?”

“The whole receipts of an Irish peer, Lord Jocelyn; and I make it a point never to lose the first game.”

“Such men are dangerous,” said Lord Saltream, with his eyes shut.

“O, Night!” cried Godolphin, springing up theatrically, “thou wert made for song, and moonlight, and laughter—but woman’s laughter! Fanny, a song, the pretty quaint song *you* sang me, years since, in praise of a London life.”

Fanny, who had been in the pouts ever since

Saville had blamed the champagne — for she was very anxious to be *du bon ton* in her own little way—now began to smile once more ; and, as the moon played on her arch face, she seated herself at the piano, and, glancing at Godolphin, sang the following song—

LOVE COURTS THE PLEASURES.

1.

“ Young lover, come live with me,

But not in your rustic bowers ;

For the leaf soon flies the tree,

And a breeze can nip your flowers.

No, no—lover mine—no !

Vainly you chide :

Ever Old Age to the shade will go,

And Youth to the sunny side.

2.

“ Love live in solitude ?—nay !

Love flies from such desolate places ;

His mother was brought up at court, they say,

And he lives with the lady Graces.

No, no—lover mine—no !

The Town for me !

The constant mirth and the glittering show,—

And a heart of smiles for thee.

3.

“ Will I fly from the crowd ?—alas !

Thou wouldst weary the first, my own love !

The wine of life is a *social* glass,

And not to be quaffed alone, love.

No, no—lover mine—no !

'Tis not *one* ray

Lights up the streams of the heart as they

flow,

To the Silent Gulf away !

4.

“ Young lover, come live with me,

Give thy heart to its cage, uncaring,

And if ever it would be free,

We'll give it a noon-day airing.

For oh, oh—lover mine—oh !

Safely we roam,

When the vapours of life are where we go,

And its sunshine all at home !”

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAREER OF CONSTANCE.—REAL STATE OF HER FEELINGS TOWARD GODOLPHIN.—RAPID SUCCESSION OF POLITICAL EVENTS.—CANNING'S ADMINISTRATION.—CATHOLIC QUESTION.—LORD GREY'S SPEECH.—CANNING'S DEATH.

WHILE in scenes like these, alternated with more refined and aristocratic dissipation, Godolphin lavished away his life, Constance became more and more powerful as the centre and soul of a great political party. Few women in England ever mixed more actively in politics than Lady Erpingham, or with more remarkable ability. Her friends were out of office, it is true; but she saw the time ap-

proaching rapidly when their opinions must come into power. She had begun to love, for itself, the scheming of political ambition, and in any country but England she would have been a conspirator, and in old times might have risen to be a queen: but as it was, she was only a proud, discontented woman. She knew, too, that it was all she could be—all that her sex allowed her to be—yet did she not the less struggle and toil on. The fate of her father still haunted her; her promise and his death-bed still rose oft and solemnly before her; the humiliations she had known in her early condition—the homage that had attended her later career—still cherished in her haughty soul indignation at the insolence of the great world, and scorn at its servility. That system of “fashion” she had so mainly contributed to strengthen, and which was originally by her intended to build up a standard of opi-

nion independent of mere rank, and in defiance of mere wealth, she saw polluted and debased by the nature of its followers, into a vulgar effrontery, which was worse than the more quiet dulness it had attempted to supplant. Yet still she was comforted by the thought that through this system lay the way to more wholesome changes. The idols of rank and wealth once broken, she believed that a pure and sane worship must ultimately be established. Doubtless in the old French *régime* there were many women who *thought* like her, but there were none who *acted* like her—deliberately, and with an end. What an excellent, what a warning picture is contained in the entertaining memoirs of Count Segur! how admirably that agreeable gossip developes the state of mind among the nobility of France!—“merry censurers of the old customs”—“enchanted by the philosophy of Voltaire”—“ridi-

culing the old system"—“embracing liberality as a fashion,” and “gaily treading a soil bedecked with flowers, which concealed a precipice from their view !” In England there are fewer flowers, and the precipice will be less fearful.

A certain disappointment which had attended her marriage with Godolphin, and the disdainful resentment she felt at the pleasures that allured him from her, tended yet more to deepen at once her distaste for the habits of a great aristocracy, and to nerve and concentrate her powers of political intrigue. Her mind grew more and more masculine ; her dark eye burnt with a sterner fire ; the sweet mouth was less prodigal of its smiles ; and that air of dignity which she had always possessed, grew harder in its character, and became *command*.

This change did not tend to draw Godolphin

nearer to her. He, so susceptible to coldness, so refining, so exacting, believed fully that she loved him no more—that she repented the marriage she had contracted. His pride was armed against her; and he sought more eagerly those scenes where all, for the admired, the gallant, the sparkling Godolphin, wore smiles and sunshine.

There was another matter that rankled in his breast with peculiar bitterness. He had wished to raise a large sum of money (in the purchase of some celebrated works of art,) which could only be raised with Lady Erpingham's consent. When he had touched upon the point to her, she had not refused, but she had hesitated. She seemed embarrassed, and he thought, discontented. His delicacy took alarm, and he never recurred to the question again; but he was secretly much displeased with her reluctant manner on that occasion.

Nothing the proud so little forget as a coolness conceived upon money matters. In this instance, Godolphin afterwards discovered that he had wronged Constance, and misinterpreted the cause of her reluctance.

Yet, as time flew on for both, both felt a yearning of the heart towards each other; and had they been thrown upon a desert island—had there been full leisure, full opportunity, for a frank, unfettered interchange and confession of thought—they would have been mutually astonished to find themselves still so beloved, and each would have been dearer to the other than in their warmest hour of earlier attachment. But when once, in a very gay and occupied life, a husband and wife have admitted a seeming indifference to creep in between them, the chances are a thousand to one against its after-removal. How much more so with a wife so proud as Constance, and a husband so

exigeant as Godolphin ! Fortunately, however, as I said before, the temper of each was excellent ; they never quarrelled ; and the indifference, therefore, lay on the surface, not at the depth. They seemed to the world an affectionate couple, as couples go ; and their union would have been classed by Rochefoucault among those marriages that are very happy—*il n'y a point de délicieux*.

Meanwhile, as Constance had predicted, the political history of the country was marked by a perpetual progress towards liberal opinions. Mr. Canning was now in office : the Catholic Question was in every one's mouth : that measure, so aristocratic in itself, so strong a proof—(in the greater sensation produced by the claim of peers and gentlemen to sit in Parliament and hold office, than by the gathering distresses of the people—the accumulated evils of the Poor Laws) —how essentially aristocratic was the

mental constitution of the upper classes ; — that question, so really insignificant to the weal of a great empire, when considered alone—was yet the first iron blow at Persecution for opinion's sake ; and in this light only Constance regarded it. Doubtless, had the good of the people been the paramount interest of the Legislature, a solid and large reform in the Criminal Code would have craved attention far more loudly, far more immediately, than the rights of the Catholics to sit in Parliament : but the one was for the small, the other for the great : it is always in squabbles among themselves that an aristocracy open a breach for the people.

There was a brilliant meeting at Erpingham House ; those who composed it were of the heads of the party : but there were divisions amongst themselves : some were secretly for joining Mr. Canning's administration ; some had openly done so ; others remained in stubborn

and jealous opposition. With these last was the heart of Constance.

“Well, well, Lady Erpingham,” said Lord Paul Plympton, a young nobleman, who had written a dull history, and was therefore considered likely to succeed in parliamentary life — “Well, I cannot help thinking you are too severe upon Canning: he is certainly very liberal in his views.”

“Is there one law he ever caused to pass for the benefit of the working classes? No, Lord Paul, his Whiggism is for peers, and his Toryism for peasants. With the same zeal he advocates the Catholic Question and the Manchester Massacre.”

“But surely,” cried Lord Paul, who was the essence of Whiggery, “you make a difference between the just liberality that provides for property and intelligence, and the

dangerous liberality that would slacken the reins of an ignorant multitude."

"The first is to be a Whig, the second a Reformer," said Radclyffe, gravely--"is it not? The Whig thinks of the *property* of a country, the Reformer of the *people*—eh?"

"Hem! Yes, indeed, I think that is a very good definition," replied Lord Paul, with the air of a man intending to book *a pensée*.

"But," said Mr. Benson, a very powerful member of the Lower House, "true politicians must conform to circumstances. Canning may not be all we wish, but still he ought to be supported. I confess that I shall be generous: I care not for office, I care not for power; but Canning is surrounded with enemies, who are enemies also to the people; for that reason I shall support him."

“Bravo, Benson!” cried Lord Paul.

“Bravo, Benson!” echoed two or three notables, who had waited an opportunity to declare themselves; “that’s what I call handsome.”

“Manly!”

“Fair!”

“Disinterested, by Jove!”

Here the Duke of Aspendale suddenly entered the room. “Ah, Lady Erpingham, you should have been in the Lords’ to-night: such a speech! Canning is crushed for ever.”

“Speech! from whom?”

“Lord Grey—terrific: it was the vengeance of a life concentrated into one hour; it has shaken the Ministry fearfully.”

“Humph!” said Benson, rising; “I shall go to Brooks’s and hear more.”

“And I too,” said Lord Paul.

A day or two after, Benson, in presenting a

petition, alluded in terms of high eulogy to the masterly speech made last night by a noble Earl ; and Lord Paul Plympton said “ It was indeed unequalled.”

That’s what I call handsome.

Manly !

Fair !

Disinterested, by Jove !

And Canning died ; his gallant soul left the field of politics broken into a thousand petty parties. From the time of his death, the two great hosts into which the strugglers for power were divided have never recovered their former strength. The demarcation that his policy had tended to efface, was afterwards more weakened by his successor the Duke of Wellington ; and had it not been for

the question of Reform that again drew the stragglers on either side around one determined banner, it is likely that Whig and Tory would, among the many minute sections and shades of difference, have lost for ever the two broad distinguishing colours of their separate factions.

Mr. Canning died; and now, with redoubled energy, went on the wheels of political intrigue. The rapid succession of short-lived ministers, the leisure of a prolonged peace, the pressure of debt, the writings of philosophers, the absence of any great genius in the Tory faction, all, insensibly, yet quickly, excited that popular temperament which, once universally awakened, never may be allayed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF GEORGE IV.—THE POLITICAL SITUATION
OF PARTIES, AND OF LADY ERPINGHAM.

THE death of George the Fourth was the birth of a new æra. During the later years of that Monarch a silent spirit had been gathering over the land, which had crept even to the very walls of his seclusion. It cannot be denied, that the various expenses of his reign,—no longer consecrated by the youthful graces of the prince, no longer disguised beneath the military triumphs of the people,—had contributed far more than theoretical

speculations to the desire of political change. The shortest road to increased liberty lies through attenuated pockets !

Constance was much at Windsor during the King's last illness, one of the saddest periods that ever passed within the walls of a palace. The memorialists of the reign of the magnificent Louis XIV. will best convey to the reader a notion of the last days of George IVth. For, like that great king, he was the representation in himself of a particular period, and he preserved much of the habits of (and much too of the personal interest attached to) his youth through the dreary decline of age. It was melancholy to see one who had played not only so exalted, but so gallant a part, breathing his life away ; nor was the gloom diminished by the many glimpses of a fine

original nature, which broke forth amidst infirmity and disease.

George the Fourth died ; his brother succeeded ; and the English world began to breathe more freely, to look around, and to feel that the change, long coming, was come at last. The French Revolution, the new parliament, Lord Brougham's return for Yorkshire, Mr. Hume's return for Middlesex, the burst of astonished indignation at the Duke of Wellington's memorable words against Reform, all betrayed, while they ripened, the signs of the new age. The Whig Ministry was appointed, appointed amidst discontents in the city, suspicions amongst the friends of the people, (long sickened at the name of Whig,) amidst fires and insurrections in the provinces ;—convulsions abroad, and turbulence at home.

The situation of Constance, in these changes, was rather curious ; her intimacy with the late King was no recommendation with the Whig government of his successor. Her power, as the power of fashion always must in stormy times, had received a shock ; and as she had of late been a little divided from the main body of the Whigs, she did not share at once in their success, or claim to be one of their allies. She remained silent and aloof ; her parties were numerous and splendid as ever, but the small plotting *réunions* of political intriguers were suspended. She hinted mysteriously at the necessity of pausing, to see *what* reform the new ministers would recommend, and what economy they would effect. The Tories, especially the more moderate tribe, began to court her ; the Whigs, flushed with their triumph, and too

busy to think of women, began to neglect. This last circumstance the high Constance felt keenly, but with the keenness rather of scorn than indignation; years had deepened her secret disgust at all aristocratic ordinances, and looking rather at what the Whigs had been than what, pressed by the times, they have become, she regarded them as only playing with democrat counters for aristocratic rewards. She repaid their neglect with contempt, and the silent neutralist soon became regarded by them as the secret foe.

But Constance was sufficiently the woman to feel mortified and wounded by that which she affected to despise. No post at court had been offered to her by her former friends; the confidant of George the Fourth had ceased to be the confidant of Lord Grey. Arrived at that doubtful time of life when the beauty, although possessing, is no longer assured of

her charms, she felt the decay of her personal influence as a personal affront ; and thus vexed, wounded, alarmed, in her mid-career, Constance was more than ever sensible of the peculiar disquietudes that await female ambition, and turned with sighs more frequent than heretofore to the recollections of that domestic love which seemed lost to her for ever.

Mingled with the more outward and visible storm of politics there was, as there ever is, a latent tide of more theoretic and ultimate opinions. While the practical politicians were playing their momentary parts, schemers, and levellers, and speculators, were propagating in all quarters doctrines which they fondly imagined were addressed to immortal ends. And Constance, who had always more strongly felt a desire for social than for legislative reform, began to turn with some curiosity to these devisers of the grander order of experiment.

Shut up with the enthusiastic followers of St. Simon and Owen, the bright Countess listened to their harangues, pondered over their demonstrations, and mused over their hopes. But she had lived too much on the surface of the actual world, her habits of thought were too essentially worldly, to be converted, while she was attracted, by doctrines so startling in their ultimate conclusions. She turned once more to herself, and waited, in a sad and thoughtful stillness, the progress of things—convinced only of the vanity of them all.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROUÉ, A VALETUDINARIAN—NEWS—A FORTUNE-TELLER.

MEANWHILE the graced Godolphin floated down the sunny tide of his prosperity. He lived chiefly with a knot of epicurean dalliers with the time, whom he had selected from the wittiest, and the easiest, of the London voluptuaries. Dictator of theatres—patron of operas—oracle in music—mirror of entertainments and equipage—to these conditions had his natural genius and his once dream-

ing dispositions been bowed at last ! A round of dissipation, however, left him no time for reflection ; and he believed, (perhaps he was not altogether wrong,) that the best way to preserve the happy equilibrium of the heart is to blunt its susceptibilities. As the most uneven shapes, when whirled into rapid and ceaseless motion, will appear a perfect circle, so, once impelled in a career that admits no pause, our life loses its uneven angles, and glides on in smooth and rounded celerity, with false aspects more symmetrical than the truth.

One day Godolphin visited Saville ; who now, old, worn, and fast waning to the grave, cropped the few flowers on the margin, and jested, but with sourness, on his own decay. He found the actress, (who had also come to visit the man of pleasure,) sitting by the window, and rattling away with her usual vivacity,

while she divided her attention with the labours of knitting a purse.

“God only knows,” said Saville, “what all these times will produce. I lose my head in the dizzy quickness of events; Fanny, hand me my snuff-box. Well, I fancy my last hour is not far distant, but I hope at least I shall die a gentleman. I have a great dislike to the thought of being revolutionized into a *roturier*. That’s the only sort of revolution I have any notion about. What do you say to all this, Godolpin? Every one else is turning politician; young Sunderland, with his brocade waistcoat, whirls his cab down to the House at four o’clock every day—dines at Bellamy’s on cold beef; and talks of nothing but that d——d good speech of Sir Robert’s! Revolution! faith, the revolution is come already. Revolutions only change the aspect

of society ; is it not changed enough within the last six months ? bah ! I suppose you are bit by the mania ?”

“ Not I ! while I live I will abjure the vulgar toil of ambition. Let others rule or ruin the state ;—like the Duc de Lauzun, while the guillotine is preparing, I will think only of my oysters and my champagne.”

“ A noble creed !” said Fanny, smiling ; “ let the world go to wreck, and bring me my biscuit ! That’s Godolphin’s motto.”

“ It is life’s motto.”

“ Yes—a gentleman’s life.”

“ Pish ! Fanny ; no satire from you : you, who are not (properly speaking) even a *tragic* actress ! But there is something about your profession sublimely picturesque in the midst of these noisy brawls. The storms of nations shake not the stage ; you are wrapt in another

life ; the atmosphere of poetry girds you. You are like the fairies who lived among men, visible only at night, and playing their fantastic tricks amidst the surrounding passions—the sorrow, the crime, the avarice, the love, the wrath, the luxury, the famine, that belong to the grosser sharers of the earth. You are to be envied, Fanny.”

“ Not so ; I am growing old.”

“ Old !” cried Saville : “ Ah, talk not of it ! Ugh !—Ugh ! Curse this cough ! But hang politics ; it always brings disagreeable reflections. Glad, my old pupil, glad am I to see that you still retain your august indifference to these foolish struggles about us—insects splashing and struggling in the vast stream of events, which they scarcely stir, and in which they scarcely drop before they are drowned—”

“ Or the fishes, their passions, devour them,” said Godolphin.

“ News ! ” cried Saville ; “ let us have real news ; cut all the politics out of ‘ The Times,’ Fanny, with your scissors, and then read me the rest.”

Fanny obeyed.

“ ‘ Fire in Marylebone ! ’ ”

“ That ’s not news !—skip that.”

“ ‘ Letter from *Radical*. ’ ”

“ Stuff ! What else ? ”

“ ‘ Emigration : — No fewer than sixty-eight—— ’ ”

“ Hold ! for mercy’s sake ! What do I, just going out of the world, care for people only going out of the country ? Here, child, give the paper to Godolphin ; he knows exactly what would interest men of sense.”

“ ‘ Sale of Lord Lysart’s wines —— ’ ”

“ Capital ! ” cried Saville : “ *that*’s news—*that*’s interesting ! ”

Fanny’s pretty hands returned to their knit-

ting. When the wines had been discussed, the following paragraph was chanced upon:—

“There is a foolish story going the round of the papers about Lord Grey and his vision;—the vision is only in the silly heads of the inventors of the story, and the ghost is, we suppose, the apparition of Old Sarum. By the way, there is a celebrated fortune-teller, or prophetess, now in London, making much noise. We conclude the discomfited Tories will next publish *her* oracular discourses. She is just arrived in time to predict the passing of the Reform Bill, without any fear of being proved an impostor.”

“Ah, by the by,” said Saville, “I hear wonders of this sorceress. She dreams and divines with the most singular accuracy; and all the old women of both sexes flock to her in hackney coaches, making fools of themselves to-day,

in order to be wise to-morrow. Hast seen her, Fanny?"

"Yes," replied the actress, very gravely; "and in sober earnest she has startled me. Her countenance is so striking, her eyes so wild, and in her conversation there is so much enthusiasm, that she carries you away in spite of yourself. Do you believe in astrology, Percy?"

"I almost did once," said Godolphin, with a half sigh; "but does this female seer profess to choose Astrology in preference to cards? the last is the more convenient way of tricking the public."

"Oh, but this is no vulgar fortune-teller, I assure you," cried Fanny, quite eagerly; "she dwells much on magnetism; insists on the effect of your own imagination; discards all outward quackeries; and, in short, has either

discovered a new way of learning the future, or revived some forgotten trick of deluding the public. Come and see her, some day, Godolphin."

"No, I don't like that kind of imposture," said Godolphin quickly, and turning away, he sank into a silent and gloomy reverie.

CHAPTER XV.

SUPERSTITION.—ITS WONDERFUL EFFECTS.

IT was perfectly true that there had appeared in London a person of the female sex who, during the last few years, had been much noted on the continent for the singular boldness with which she had promulgated the wildest doctrines, and the supposed felicity which had attended her vaticinations. She professed belief in all the dogmas that preceded the dawn of modern philosophy; and a strange, vivid, yet gloomy eloquence that pervaded her lan-

guage gave effect to theories which, while incomprehensible to the many, were alluring to the few. None knew her native country, although she was believed to come from the North of Europe. Her way of life was lone, her habits eccentric; she sought no companionship; she was beautiful, but not of this earth's beauty; men admired, but courted not; and, although scandal, at an earlier period, had not spared her name, she now, at least, lived apart from the reach of human passions. In fact, the strange Liehbur, for such was the name of the Prophetess, was known by (and she assumed before it the French title of Madame,) was not an impostor, but a fanatic: the chords of the brain were touched, and the sound they gave back was erring and imperfect. She was mad, but with a certain method in her madness; a cold, and preternatural, and fearful spirit abode within her, and spake from her

lips; its voice froze herself, and she was more awed by her own oracles, than her listeners themselves.

In Vienna and in Paris her renown was great, and even terrible: the greatest men in those capitals had consulted her, and spoke of her decrees with a certain reverence; her insanity thrilled them, and they mistook the cause. Besides, on the main, she was right in the principle she addressed: she worked on the imagination, and the imagination afterwards fulfilled what she predicted. Every one knows what dark things may be done by our own fantastic persuasions; belief ensures the miracles it credits. Men dream they shall die within a certain hour; the hour comes, and the dream is realized. The most potent wizardries are less potent than fancy itself. Macbeth was a murderer, not because the witches predicted, but because their pre-

diction aroused the thought. And this principle of action the prophetess knew well: she appealed to that attribute common to us all, the foolish and the wise, and on that fruitful ground she sowed her soothsayings.

In London there are always persons to run after anything new, and Madame Liehbur became at once the rage. I myself have seen a minister hurrying from her door with his cloak about his face; and the coldest of living sages confesses that she told him what he believes, by mere human means, she could not have discovered. Delusion all! But what age is free from it? The race of the nineteenth century boast their lights, but run as madly after any folly as their fathers in the eighth. What are the prophesies of St. Simon but a species of sorcery? Why believe the external more than the inner miracle?

It was evening; and Radclyffe, who had

been sitting (as a "stranger") under the gallery of the House of Commons, listening to a dull debate, came out to breathe the fresh air, and, seduced by the cool and serenity of the time, strolled into the neighbouring church-yard. Musing and thoughtful, he walked to and fro, indulging in the high reveries natural to his temper, when his eye caught the figure of another man, pausing with folded arms by a tombstone, and apparently talking to himself. Radclyffe looked hard at the figure, and recognized Lord Saltream. The Earl, in his turn, looking abruptly round, perceived Radclyffe.

"Ha!" said he gently, "and has this place any charm for you? I have stolen out from the Lords, and am looking at these humble grave-stones, to reconcile me to myself for forsaking ambition. Now," continued Lord Saltream, "just note how the distinctions we make in life stretch on beyond the

tomb. Within those walls sleep the great—without, the lowly; a wall makes all the difference between Westminster Abbey and a church-yard: yet, if the dead can feel, would it not soothe them more to be thus lapped by the green earth, and shone upon by those loving stars, than to be cloistered in the sepulchral dulness of stone and mortar? It is like our living fallacy—we suppose what is pompous must be happy. Believe me, sir, believe me, these aristocratic ordinances are but the marble monuments on which we write false tales of our dignity, deceiving no one, soothing not ourselves, and the denizens of the pure outer air are more to be envied after all.”

Radclyffe was surprised, for this was not in Lord Saltream’s usual vein of conversation.

“Why,” said he, after a momentary pause,

“ I do not agree with you that the lower ranks are the happier ; it is an aristocratic sophistry to suppose so : it reconciles us to our own advantages. We eat the turtle of life without self-reproach when we can say, ‘ Ah, that d—d fellow, starving on a crust, is much better off ! ’ But you are ill, my Lord ; ” for, putting his hand suddenly to his head, Lord Saltream staggered, and clung to Radclyffe for support.

“ I am better now—I am well now ; it is very strange — so — so — that will do. Radclyffe, have you seen that woman ? — that — what’s her name ? — not the German historian’s but devilish like it—*Liehbur* ; ah, that’s it. Go, go, she will tear such a mask from your fate, from your heart ! ”

“ You jest ! ”

“ Jest ! — Very true, these things are a jest : I won’t believe them, not I ! Radclyffe,

tell me now, am I not called odd, strange, eccentric? Don't I act and talk unlike other people?"

"Most clever persons do."

"Yes, we pay dearly for our paltry modicum of talent. The exertion of the mind hurts the body, and then the wear of the body, shivers a string or two in the mind; I understand that. But that woman has told me something; it preys on me, it haunts me;" and Saltream's face grew ghastly, his lips trembled, and the tears broke forth from his eyes.

"What do you mean? You cannot be so childish, Saltream. This impostor cannot have deceived *you*. What said she?"

"Hark," replied the Earl, sinking his voice into a whisper, "before the year ends, they'll tell you that—I'm mad!"

Inexpressibly shocked, Radclyffe sought partly to soothe, partly to laugh away, the obvious

impression that had been made on Saltream's mind, and at length he seemed to have succeeded. "Come," said Saltream, turning into the street, "my carriage is here, let us go to Lady Erpingham's; it's her night, is it not?" A change came over Radclyffe's countenance, he faltered, and at length consented to accompany the Earl.

There were but a few persons present at Lady Erpingham's, and when they entered, Madame Liehbur was the theme of the general conversation. Lord Saltream preserved a rigid silence on the subject. So many anecdotes were told, so much that was false was mingled with so much that seemed true, that Lady Erpingham's curiosity was excited and she resolved to seek the modern Cassandra with the first opportunity. Godolphin sate apart from the talkers, playing a quiet game at *écarte*, Constance's eyes stole ever and anon to his

countenance, and when she turned at length away with a sigh, she saw that Radclyffe's deep and inscrutable gaze was bent upon her, and the proud Countess blushed, although she scarce knew why.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EMPIRE OF TIME AND OF LOVE—THE PROUD
CONSTANCE GROWN WEAK AND HUMBLE—AN ORDEAL.

ABOUT this time the fine constitution of Lady Erpingham began to feel the effects of that life which, at once idle and busy, is the most exhausting of all. She suffered under no absolute illness ; she was free from actual pain ; but a fever crept over her at night, and a languid debility succeeded it the next day. She was melancholy and dejected ; tears came into her eyes without a cause ; a sudden noise made her tremble ; *her nerves were shaken*,—terrible disease, which marks a new epoch in life, which is

the first token that our youth is about to leave us !

It is in sickness that we feel our true reliance on others, especially if it is of that vague and not dangerous character when those around us are not shamed or roused into attendance ; when the care, and the soothing, and the vigilance are the result of that sympathy which true and deep love only feels. This thought broke upon Constance as she sate alone one morning, in that mood when books cannot amuse, nor music lull, nor luxury soothe, the mood of an aching memory and a spiritless frame. Above her, and over the mantelpiece of her favourite room, hung that picture of her father which I have before described ; it had been long since removed from Wendover Castle to London, for Constance wished it to be frequently in her sight. “ Alas ! ” thought she, gazing upon the proud and animated brow that

bent down upon her, “ Alas ! though in a different sphere, *thy* lot, my father, has been *mine* ; —toil unrepaid, affection slighted, sacrifices forgotten ;—a *harder* lot in part ; for thou hadst, at least, in thy stirring and magnificent career, continued excitement and perpetual triumph. But I, a woman, shut out by my sex from contest, from victory, am left only the thankless task to devise the rewards which others are to enjoy ; the petty plot, the poor intrigue, the toil without the honour, the humiliation without the revenge ; yet have I worked in thy cause, my father, and thou—thou, couldst thou see my heart, would'st pity and approve me.”

As Constance turned away her eyes they fell on the opposite mirror, which reflected her still lofty, but dimmed and faded beauty ; the worn cheek, the dejected eye, those lines and hollows which tell the progress of years ! There are certain moments when the time we have

been forgetting makes its march suddenly apparent to our own eyes; when the change we have hitherto marked not stares upon us, rude and abrupt; we almost fancy those lines, those wrinkles, planted in a single hour, so unperceived have they been before. And such a moment was this to the beautiful Constance: she started at her own likeness, and turned involuntarily from the unflattering mirror. Beside it, on her table, lay a locket, given her by Godolphin just before they married, and containing his hair: it was a simple trifle, and the simplicity seemed yet more striking amidst the costly and modern jewels that were scattered round it. As she looked on it, her heart, all woman still, flew back to the day on which, whispering eternal love, he hung it round her neck. “Ah, happy days! would that they could return!” sighed the desolate schemer; and she took the locket, kissed it, and softened

by all the numberless recollections of the past, wept silently over it. "And yet," she said, after a pause, and wiping away her tears,—
"and yet this weakness is unworthy of me. Lone, sad, ill, broken in frame and spirit as I am, he comes not near me; I am nothing to him, nothing to any one in the wide world. My heart, my heart, reconcile thyself to thy fate!—what thou hast been from my cradle, that shalt thou be to my grave. I have not even the tenderness of a child to look to—the future is all blank!"

Constance was yet half yielding to, half struggling with, these thoughts when Stainforth Radclyffe (to whom she was never denied) was suddenly announced. Time, which, sooner or later, repays perseverance, although in a deceitful coin, had brought to Radclyffe a solid earnest of future honours. His name had risen high in the literature of his country; it

was equally honoured by the many and the few; he had become a marked man, one of whom all predicted a bright hereafter. He had not yet, it is true, entered Parliament—usually the great arena in which English reputations are won—but it was simply because he had refused to enter it under the auspices of any patron; and his political knowledge, his depth of thought, and his stern, hard, ambitious mind were not the less appreciated and acknowledged. Between him and Constance, friendship had continued to strengthen, and the more so as their political sentiments wholly corresponded, although originating in different causes—her's from passion, his from reflection.

Hastily Constance turned aside her face, and brushed away her tears, as Radclyffe approached; and then seeming to busy herself amongst some papers that lay scattered on her escritoire, and gave her an excuse for concealing in part

her countenance, she said, with a constrained cheerfulness, "I am happy you are come to relieve my *ennui*; I have been looking over letters, written so many years ago, that I have been forced to remember how soon I shall cease to be young; no pleasant reflection for any woman, much less for a *Dame du Château*."

"I am at a loss for a compliment in return, as you may suppose," answered Radclyffe; "but Lady Erpingham deserves a penance for even hinting at the possibility of being ever less charming than she is; so I shall hold my tongue."

"Alas," said Constance gravely, "how little, save the mere triumphs of youth and beauty, is left to a woman! how much, nay, how entirely, in all other and loftier objects, is our ambition walled in and fettered. The human mind must have its aim, its aspiring; how can your sex blame us, then, for being frivolous, when

no aim, no aspiring, save those of frivolity, are granted us by society?"

"And is love frivolous?" said Radclyffe:
"is the Empire of the Heart nothing?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Constance, with energy;
"for the empire never lasts. We are slaves to the empire we would found; we wish to be loved, but we only succeed in loving too well ourselves. We lay up our all—our thoughts, hopes, emotions—all the treasure of our hearts—in one spot; and when we would retire from the deceits and cares of life, we find the sanctuary walled against us—we love, and are loved no longer!"

Constance had turned round with the earnestness of the feeling she expressed; and her eyes, still wet with tears, her flushed cheek, her quivering lip, struck to Radclyffe's heart more than her words. He rose involuntarily; his own agitation was marked; he moved seve-

ral steps towards Constance, and then checked the impulse, and muttered indistinctly to himself.

“No,” said Constance, mournfully, and scarcely heeding him—“it is in vain for *us* to be ambitious. We only deceive ourselves; we are not stern and harsh enough for the passion. Touch our affections, and we are recalled at once to the sense of our weakness; and I—I—would to God that I were a humble peasant girl, and not—not what I am!”

So saying, the lofty Constance sank down, overpowered with the bitterness of her feelings, and covered her face with her hands. Was Radclyffe a man, that he could see this unmoved?—that he could hear those beautiful lips breathe complaints for the want of love, and not acknowledge the love that burned at his own heart? Long, secretly, resolutely, had he struggled against the passion for Constance,

which his frequent intercourse with her had fed, and which his consciousness, that in her was the only parallel to himself that he had ever met with in her sex, had first led him to form ;—and now lone, neglected, sad, this haughty woman wept over her unloved lot in his presence, and still he was not at her feet ! He spoke not, moved not, but his breath heaved thick, and his face was as pale as death. He conquered himself. All within Radclyffe obeyed the idol he had worshipped, even before Constance ; all within him, if ardent and fiery, was also high and generous. The acuteness of his reason permitted him no self-sophistries ; and he would have laid his head on the block rather than breathe a word of that love, which he knew, from the moment it was confessed, would become unworthy of Constance and himself.

There was a pause. Lady Erpingham,

ashamed, confounded at her own weakness, recovered herself slowly and in silence. Radclyffe at length spoke; and his voice, at first trembling and indistinct, grew, as he proceeded, clear and earnest.

“Never,” said he, “shall I forget the confidence your emotions have testified in my—my friendship; I am about to deserve it. Do not, my dear friend, (let me so call you,) do not forget, that life is too short for misunderstandings in which happiness is concerned. You believe that—that Godolphin does not repay the affection you have borne him: do not be angry, dear Lady Erpingham; I feel it indelicate in me to approach that subject, but my regard for you emboldens me. I know Godolphin’s heart; he may seem light, neglectful, but he loves you as deeply as ever; he loves you entirely.”

Constance, humbled as she was, listened

in breathless silence ; her cheek burned with blushes, and those blushes were at once to Radclyffe a torture and a reward.

“ At this moment,” continued he, with constrained calmness, “ at this moment he fancies in you that very coldness you lament in him. Pardon me, Lady Erpingham ; but Godolphin’s nature is wayward, mysterious, and exacting. Have you consulted, have you studied it sufficiently ? Note it well, soothe it ; and if his love can repay you, you will be repaid. God bless you, dearest Lady Erpingham !”

In a moment more, Radclyffe had left the apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONSTANCE MAKES A DISCOVERY THAT TOUCHES AND ENLIGHTENS HER AS TO GODOLPHIN'S NATURE.—AN EVENT, ALTHOUGH IN PRIVATE LIFE, NOT WITHOUT ITS INTEREST.

IF Constance most bitterly reproached herself, or rather her slackened nerves, her breaking health, that she had before another—that other too, not of her own sex—betrayed her dependence upon even her husband's heart for happiness; if her conscience instantly took alarm at the error (and it was indeed one) which had revealed to any man her domestic griefs; yet, on the other hand, she could not

control the wild thrill of delight with which she recalled those words that had so solemnly assured her she was still beloved by Godolphin. She had a firm respect in Radclyffe's penetration and his sincerity, and knew that he was one neither to deceive her, or be deceived himself: his advice, too, came home to her. Had she indeed, with sufficient address, sufficient softness, insinuated herself into Godolphin's nature. Neglected herself, had she not neglected in return? She asked herself this question, and was never weary of examining her past conduct. That Radclyffe, the austere and chilling Radclyffe, entertained for her any feeling warmer than friendship, she never for an instant suspected; that suspicion alone would have driven him from her presence for ever. And although there had been a time, in his bright and exulting youth, when Radclyffe had not been without those arts which win, in

the opposite sex, affection from aversion itself, those arts doubled, ay, a hundred-fold, in their fascination, would not have availed him with the pure but disappointed Constance, even had a sense of right and wrong very different from the standard he *now* acknowledged permitted him to exert them. So that his was rather the sacrifice of impulse, than of any triumph that impulse could afterwards have gained him.

Many, and soft and sweet were now the recollections of Constance. Her heart flew back to her early love among the shades of Wendo-ver; to the first confession of the fair enthusiastic boy, when he offered at her shrine a mind, a genius, a heart capable of fruits which the indolence of after-life, and the lethargy of disappointed hope, had blighted before their time. If he was now so deaf to what she considered the nobler, because more stirring, excitements of life, was she not in some measure

answerable for the supineness? Had there not been a day in which he had vowed to toil, to labour, to sacrifice the very bias of his mind, for an union with her? Was she, after all, was she right to adhere so rigidly to her father's dying words, and to that vow afterwards confirmed by her own pride and bitterness of soul? She looked to her father's portrait for an answer; and that daring and eloquent face seemed, for the first time, cold and unanswering to her appeal.

In such meditations the hours passed, and midnight came on without Constance having quitted her apartment. She now summoned her woman, and inquired if Godolphin was at home. He had come in about an hour since, and, complaining of fatigue, had retired to rest. Constance again dismissed her maid, and stole to his apartment. He was already asleep; his cheek rested on his arm, and his fair

hair fell wildly over a brow that now worked under the influence of his dreams. Constance put the light softly down, and seating herself beside him, watched over a sleep which, if it had come suddenly on him, was not the less unquiet and disturbed. At length he muttered, "Yes, Lucilla, yes; I tell you, you are avenged. I have not forgotten you! I have not forgotten that I betrayed, deserted you! but was it my fault? No, no! Yet I have not the less sought to forget it. These poor excesses,—these chilling gaieties,—were they not incurred for you?—and now you come—you—ah, no!—spare me!"

Shocked and startled, Constance drew back. Here was a new key to Godolphin's present life, his dissipation, his thirst for pleasure. Had he indeed sought to lull the stings of conscience? And she, instead of soothing, of reconciling him to the past, had she left him

alone to struggle with bitter and unresting thoughts, and to contrast the devotion of the one lost with the indifference of the one gained? She crept back to her own chamber, to commune with her heart and be still.

“My dear Percy,” said she, the next day, when he carelessly sauntered into her *boudoir* before he rode out, “I have a favour to ask of you.”

“Who ever denied a favour to Lady Erpingham?”

“Not you, certainly; but my favour is a great one.”

“It is granted.”

“Let us pass the summer in ——shire.”

Godolphin’s brow grew clouded.

“At Wendover Castle?” said he, after a pause.

“We have never been there since our marriage,” said Constance, evasively.

“Humph!—as you will.”

“It was the place,” said Constance, “where you, Percy, first told me you loved!”

The tone of his wife’s voice struck on the right chord in Godolphin’s breast; he looked up, and saw her eyes full of tears, and fixed upon him.

“Why, Constance,” said he, much affected, “who would have thought that you still cherished that remembrance!”

“Ah! when shall I forget it?” said Constance; “*then* you loved me!”

“And was rejected.”

“Hush! but I believe now that I was wrong.”

“No, Constance; you were wrong, for your own happiness, that the rejection was not renewed.”

“Percy!”

“Constance!” and in the accent of that

last word, there was something that encouraged Constance, and she threw herself into Godolphin's arms, and murmured :—

“ If I have offended, forgive me ; let us be to each other what we once were.”

Words like these from the lips of one in whom such tender supplication, such feminine yearnings, were not common, subdued Godolphin at once. He folded her in his arms, and kissing her passionately, whispered, “ Be always thus, Constance, and you will be more to me than ever.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL BRINGS FORWARD THE BILL—
A VERY SHORT CHAPTER.

THIS reconciliation was not so short-lived as matters of the kind frequently are. There is a Chinese proverb which says: "How near are two hearts when there is no deceit between them!" and the misunderstanding of their mutual sentiments being removed, their affection became at once visible to each other. And Constance, reproaching herself for her former pride, mingled in her manner to her husband, a gentle, even a humble sweetness,

which, being exactly that he had most desired in her, was what most attracted him.

At this time, Lord John Russell brought forward his Reform. Lady Erpingham was in the lantern of the House of Commons on that memorable night; like every one else, her feelings at first were all absorbed in surprise. She went home; she hastened to Godolphin's library. Leaning his head on his hand, that strange person, in the midst of events that stirred the destinies of Europe, was absorbed in the old subtleties of Spinoza. In the frank confidence of revived love, she put her hand upon his shoulder, and told him rapidly that news which was then on its way to agitate and delight the whole of England.

“Will this charm *you*, dear Constance?” said he, kindly; “is it a blow to this oligarchy *you* hate, and *I* pity? or will it preserve them

by a surrender of what is hateful? Will cutting off the wen save or kill?"

"Save, if the reform stop here; kill, if the spirit of the age, having more open vents for expression, grows accelerated in its career. My Father!—would to God he had seen this day! It was this system, the patron and the nominee system, that crushed, and debased, and killed him. And now, I shall see that system destroyed."

"So then, my Constance will go over to the Whigs in earnest?"

"Yes, because I shall meet there truth and the people!"

Godolphin laughed gently at the French exaggeration of the saying, and Constance forgave him.

The fine ladies of London were a little divided as to the merits of the "Bill;" Constance was the first that declared in its favour.

This surprised both Whig and Tory; but she was an important ally—as important, at least, as a woman can be. A bright spirit reigned in her eye; her step grew more elastic; her voice more glad. This was the happiest time of her life—she was happy in the renewal of her love, happy in the approaching triumph of her hate.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOOTHSAYER — AN EPISODICAL MYSTERY, INTRODUCED AS A TYPE OF THE MANY THINGS IN LIFE THAT ARE NEVER ACCOUNTED FOR—GRATUITOUS DEVIATIONS FROM OUR COMMON CAREER.

IN Leicester Square there is a dim old house which I have but this instant visited, in order to bring back more vividly to my recollection the wild and unhappy being who, for some short time, inhabited its old-fashioned and gloomy chambers.

In that house, at the time I now speak of, lodged the mysterious Liehbur. It was late at noon, and she sate alone in her apartment,

which was darkened so as to exclude the broad and peering sun. There was no trick, nor sign of the fallacious art she professed, visible in the large and melancholy room. One or two books in the German language lay on the table beside which she sate ; but they were of the recent poetry, and not of the departed dogmas, of the genius of that tongue. The enthusiast was alone, and, with her hand supporting her chin, and her eyes fixed on vacancy, she seemed feeding in silence the thoughts that flitted to and fro athwart a brain which had for years lost its certain guide ; a deserted mansion, whence the lord had departed, and where spirits not of this common life had taken up their haunted and desolate abode. And never was there a countenance better suited to the character which this singular woman had assumed. Rich, thick auburn hair was parted loosely over a brow in which the

large and full temples would have betrayed to a phrenologist the great preponderance which the dreaming and the imaginative bore over the sterner faculties. Her eyes were deep, intense, but of the bright and wandering glitter which is so powerful in its effect on the beholder, because it betokens that thought which is not of this daily world, and inspires that fear, that sadness, that awe, which few have looked on the face of the insane and not experienced. Her features were still noble, and of the fair Greek symmetry of the painter's Sibyl; but the cheeks were worn and hollow, and one bright spot alone broke their marble paleness; her lips were, however, full, and yet red, and, by their uncertain and varying play, gave frequent glimpses of teeth lustrously white, which, while completing the beauty of her face, aided — with somewhat of a fearful effect — the burning light of her strange eyes,

and the vague, mystic expression of her abrupt and unjoyous smile. You might see, when her features were, as now, in a momentary repose, that her health was broken, and that she was not long sentenced to wander over that world where the soul had already ceased to find its home ; but, the instant she spoke, her colour deepened, and the brilliant and rapid alternations of her countenance deceived the eye, and concealed the ravages of the worm that preyed within.

“ Yes,” said she, at last breaking silence, and soliloquizing in the English tongue, but with somewhat of a foreign accent ; “ yes, I am in his city ; within a few paces of his home ; I have seen him, I have heard him. Night after night—in rain, and in the teeth of the biting winds, I have wandered round his home. Ay ! and I could have raised my voice, and shrieked a warning, and a prophecy, that should have

startled him from his sleep as the trumpet of the last angel ! but I hushed the sound within my soul, and covered the vision with a thick silence. Oh, God ! what have I seen, and felt, and known, since he last saw me ! But we shall meet again ; and, ere the year has rolled round, I shall feel the touch of his lips and die ! *Die !* what calmness, what luxury, in the word ! The fiery burthen of this dread knowledge I have heaped upon me, shuffled off ; memory no more ; the past, the present, the future, exorcised ; and a long sleep, with bright dreams of a lulling sky, and a silver voice, and his presence !”

The door opened, and a black girl of about ten years old, in the costume of her Moorish tribe, announced the arrival of a new visitor. The countenance of Madame Liehbur changed at once into an expression of cold and settled calmness ; she ordered the visitor to be admit-

ted ; and presently, Stainforth Radclyffe entered the room.

* * * *

“ Thou mistakest me and my lore,” said the diviner ; “ I meddle not with the tricks and schemes of the worldly ; I show the truth, not garble it.”

“ Psha !” said Radclyffe, hastily ; “ this jargon cannot deceive me. You exhibit your skill for money ; I ask one exertion of it, and desire you to name your reward. Let us talk after the fashion of this world, and leave that of the other to our dupes.”

“ Yet, thou hast known grief too,” said the diviner, musingly, “ and those who have sorrowed ought to judge more gently of each other. Wilt thou try my art on thyself, ere thou askest it for others ?”

“ Ay, if you could restore the dead to my dreams.”

“ I can !” replied the soothsayer, sternly.

Radclyffe laughed bitterly. “ Away with this talk to me ; or if you would convince me, raise at once the spectre I desire to see !”

“ And dost thou think, vain man,” replied Liehbur, haughtily, “ that I pretend to the power thou speakest of? Yes, I do ; but not as the impostors of old (dull and gross, appealing to outward spells, and spells wrought by themselves alone) affected to do ! I can bring the dead before thee, but thou thyself must act upon thyself.”

“ Mummery ! What would you drive at ?”

“ Wilt thou fast three days, and for three nights abstain from sleep, and then visit me once again ?”

“ No, fair deluder ; such a preliminary is too much to ask of a Neophyte. Three days without food, and three nights without sleep? why,

you would have to raise myself from the dead!"

"And canst thou," said the diviner with great dignity, "canst thou hope that thou wouldst be worthy of a revelation from a higher world — that for thee the keys of the grave should unlock their awful treasure, and the dead return to life, when thou scruplest to mortify thy flesh and loosen the earthly bonds that cumber and chain the spirit? I tell thee, that only as the soul detaches itself from the frame, can its inner and purer sense awaken, and the full consciousness of the invisible and divine things that surround it descend upon its powers."

"And what," said Radclyffe, startled more by the countenance and voice than the words themselves of the soothsayer; "what would you then do, supposing that I performed this penance?"

"Awaken to their utmost sense, even to pain

and torture, the naked nerves of that great power thou callest the IMAGINATION ; that power which presides over dreams and visions, which kindles song, and lives in the Heart of Melodies ; which inspired the Magian of the East and the Pythian voices—and, in the storms and thunder of savage lands, originated the notion of a God and the seeds of human worship ; that vast presiding Power which, to the things of mind, is what the Deity is to the Universe itself—the Creator of all. I would awaken, I say, that Power from its customed sleep where, buried in the heart, it folds its wings, and lives but by fits and starts, unquiet but unaroused ; and by that Power thou wouldst see, and feel, and know, and through it only thou wouldst exist. So that it would be with thee, as if the body were not ; as if thou wert already all-spiritual, all-living. So thou wouldst learn in life that which may be open to thee after death ; and so, soul might now, as hereafter, converse with

soul, and revoke the Past, and sail prescient down the dark tides of the Future. A brief and fleeting privilege, but dearly purchased. Be wise, and disbelieve it; be happy, and reject it !”

Radclyffe was impressed, despite himself, by the solemn novelty of this language, and the deep mournfulness with which the soothsayer’s last sentence died away.

“ And how,” said he, after a pause, “ how, and by what arts, would you so awaken the imaginative faculty ?”

“ Ask not until the time comes for the trial,” answered Liehbur.

“ But can you awaken it in all ?—the dull, the unideal, as in the musing and exalted ?”

“ No ! but the dull and unideal will not go through the necessary ordeal. Few besides those for whom Fate casts her great parts in life’s drama, ever come to that point when I can teach them the future.”

“ Do you mean that your chief votaries are among the great? Pardon me, I should have thought the most superstitious are to be found among the most ignorant and lowly.”

“ Yes ; but they consult only what imposes on their credulity, without demanding stern and severe sacrifice of time and enjoyment, as I do. The daring, the resolute, the scheming, with their souls intent upon great objects and high dreams—those are the men who despise the charms of the moment, who are covetous of piercing the far future, who know how much of their hitherward career has been brightened, not by genius or nature, but some strange confluence of events, some mysterious agency of fate. The great are always fortunate, and therefore mostly seekers into the decrees of fortune.”

So great is the influence which enthusiasm, right or wrong, always exercises over us, that even the hard and acute Radclyffe—who had

entered the room with the most profound contempt for the pretensions of the soothsayer, and partly from a wish to cure the infirmity of Saltream by the same means which had created it, partly, it may be, from *the desire to examine* which belonged to his nature — began to consider in his own mind whether he should yield to his curiosity, now strongly excited, and pledge himself to the preliminary penance the diviner had ordained.

The soothsayer continued :—

“ The stars, and the clime, and the changing moon, have power over us—why not? Do they not have influence over the rest of nature? But we can only unravel their more august and hidden secrets, by giving full wing to the creative spirit which first taught us their elementary nature, and which, when released from earth, will have full range to wander over their brilliant fields. Know, in one word, the Imagi-

nation and the Soul are *one*, one indivisible and the same ; on that truth rests all my lore."

" And if I followed your precepts, what other preliminaries would you enjoin ?"

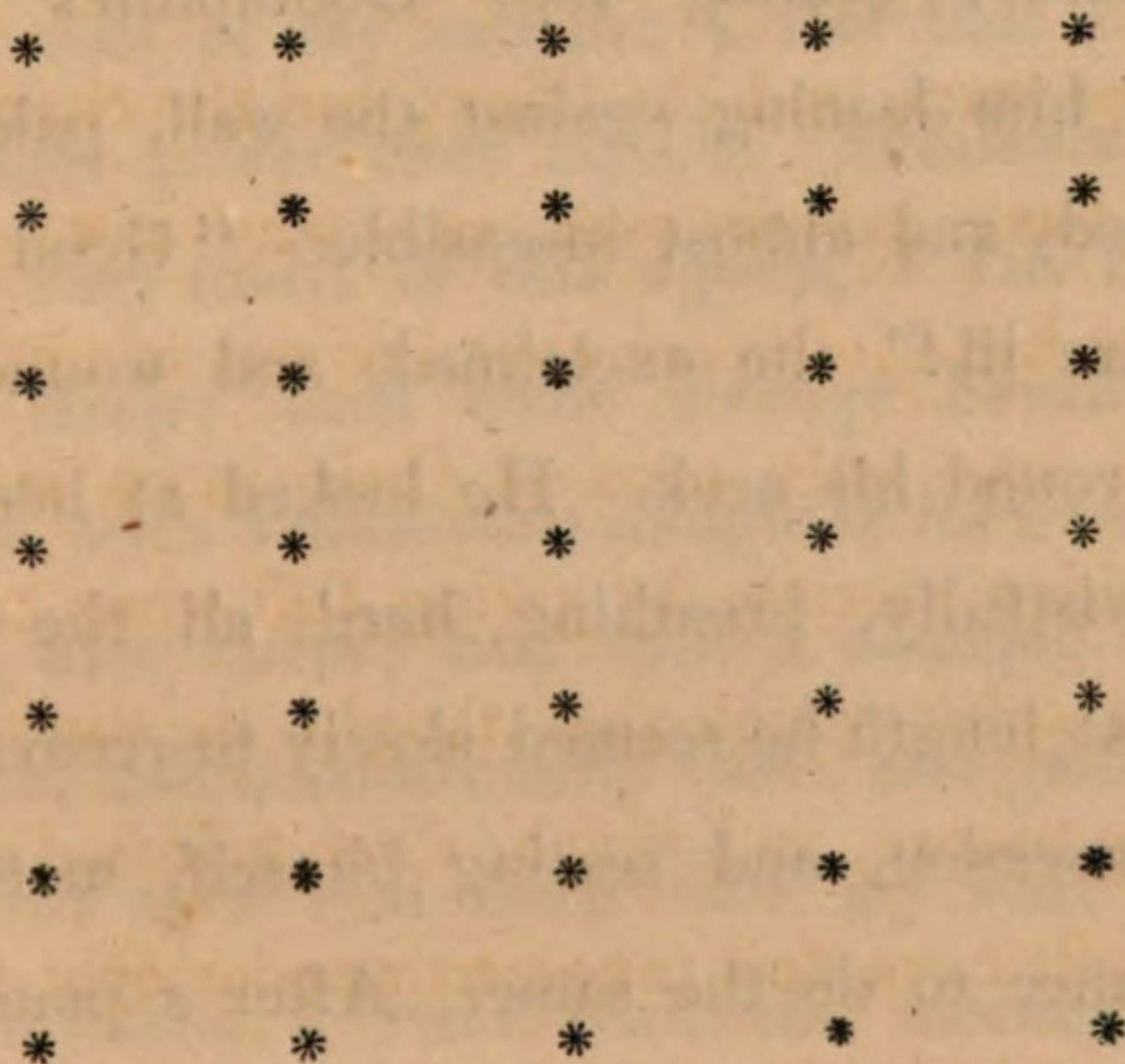
" Not until thou engagest to perform them, will I tell thee more."

" I engage !"

" And swear ?"

" I swear !"

The soothsayer rose—and--



CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH THE COMMON LIFE GLIDES INTO THE
STRANGE — EQUALLY TRUE, BUT THE TRUTH NOT
EQUALLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

IT was on the night of this interview that Constance, coming into Godolphin's room, found him leaning against the wall, pale, and agitated, and almost insensible. "Good God, you are ill!" she exclaimed, and wound her arms round his neck. He looked at her long and wistfully, breathing hard all the time, until at length he seemed slowly to recover his self-possession, and seating himself, motioned Constance to do the same. After a pause, he said, clasping her hand,

“Listen to me, Constance. My health, I fear, is breaking; I am tormented by fearful visions; I am possessed by some magic influence. For several nights successively, before falling asleep, a cold tremor has gradually pervaded my frame; the roots of my hair stand on end; my teeth chatter; a vague horror seizes me; my blood seems turned to a solid substance, so curdled and stagnant is it. I strive to speak, to cry out, but my voice clings to the roof of my mouth; I feel that I have no longer power over myself. Suddenly, and in the very midst of this agony, I fall into a heavy sleep; then come strange bewildering dreams, with Volktman’s daughter for ever presiding over them; but with a changed countenance, calm, unutterably calm, and gazing on me with eyes that burn into my soul. The dream fades, I wake with the morning, but exhausted and enfeebled. I have consulted

physicians ; I have taken drugs ; but I cannot break the spell—the previous horror and the after-dreams. And just now, Constance, just now—you see the window lies open to the park, the gate of the garden is unclosed ; I happened to lift my eyes, and lo ! gazing upon me in the sickly moonlight, was the countenance of my dreams—Lucilla's, but how altered ! Merciful Heaven ! is it a mockery, or can the living Lucilla really be in England ? and have these visions, these terrors, been part of that mysterious sympathy which united us ever, and which her father predicted should cease but with our lives ?”

The emotions of Godolphin were so rarely visible, and in the present instance, they were so unaffected, and so roused, that Constance could not summon courage to soothe, to cheer him ; she was alarmed and shocked herself, and glanced fearfully towards the window, lest the

apparition he had spoken of should reappear. All without was still, not a leaf stirred on the trees in the Mall; no human figure was to be seen. She turned again to Godolphin, and kissed the drops from his brow, and pressed his cheek to her bosom.

“I have a presentiment,” said he, “that something dreadful will happen shortly. I feel as if I were near some great crisis of my life; and as if I were about to step from the bright and palpable world, into regions of cloud and darkness. Constance, strange misgivings as to my choice in my past life, haunt and perplex me. I have sought only the present; I have abjured all toil, all ambition, and laughed at the future; my hand has grasped the rose leaves, and now they lie withered in the grasp. My youth flies me, ultimately age scowls near and harsh upon me; an age of frivolities that I once scorned; yet—yet, had I formed a different

creed, how much I might have done ! But—but, out on this cant ! My nerves are shattered, and I prate nonsense. Lend me your arm, Constance ; let us go into the saloon, and send for music !”

In the course of the evening, Lord Saltream looked in upon Godolphin, on his way to the House of Lords. The gloom on the spirits of each proved attractive to the other ; they drew to the fire, which was low and dying, and talked of a thousand matters graver than the world loves to talk upon. Lord Saltream referred to Madame Liehbur, to her conversation, to its effect upon him, to the charms, real or pretended, wherewith she had wrought upon his fancy, and the nature and detail of which he had solemnly sworn never to reveal ; of the recallings and recolourings of the past that had been brought before him ; of the dim prophesyings of the future that had been foreshown him ;

and then he shuddered, and told Godolphin that most fearful of all predictions which he had before hinted to Radclyffe. And Godolphin listened with deep interest ; his own nightly tortures, the late apparition at his window, all disposed him to a superstitious train of mind. These he, in turn, imparted to Saltream. Constance sate by, and said nothing, although she felt a sad and incredulous wonder at such impressions on such minds.

Lord Saltream was one of the political alarmists ; he considered the country on the eve of a violent and terrible revolution ; he thought those changes would be effected by force which will be wrought by opinion.

“ It is strange,” said he, “ that in troubled times, however recent, however generally enlightened, we find these preternatural excitors, enthusiasts, and soothsayers, abound, and obtaining proselytes among more sober and

inquiring minds, than it would seem possible in ordinary moments to submit to control. Thus, in the revolution that placed Braganza on the throne of Portugal, we observe the abstrusest theories in fashion, and even influencing the conductors of the revolution. In France, from the first outbreak of their revolution, all sorts of prophecies abounded ; a sect of fanatics professed to teach the future, and among their proselytes, they included some of the after actors in that terrible drama. Even preceding the downfall of Napoleon, similar extravagancies found similar favour ; the wildest speculations went hand-in-hand with the most stirring truths. Look back to our own civil wars against Charles the First, and recall the numberless superstitions that sprang up in that stormy period ; and now, when (come or end how it may) a great change is working throughout the opinions and systems of this country, men patient of research, reasoning and

collected, like us, are absolutely tinctured by superstitions which never approached us before, and which shake our spirits to their seat. It is as if the excitement and ferment of the universal intellect worked also in small and individual channels, and whirled at the same time, from their repose, the knotted oak, and the humble straw."

Thus talking, and interweaving their talk with a thousand fantastic anecdotes and fancies, the evening passed.

And all that night Constance watched by the side of Godolphin, and marked in mute terror the convulsions that wrung his sleep, the foam that gathered to his lip, the cries that broke from his tongue. But she was rewarded when, with the grey dawn, he awoke, and catching her tender and tearful gaze, flung himself upon her bosom, and bade God bless her for her love!

CHAPTER XXI.

A MEETING BETWEEN CONSTANCE AND THE
PROPHETESS.

A STRANGE suspicion had entered Constance's mind, and for Godolphin's sake she resolved to put it to the proof. She drew her mantle round her stately figure, put on a large, disguising bonnet, and repaired to Madame Liehbur's house.

The Moorish girl opened the door to the Countess; and her strange dress, her Afric hue and features, relieved by the long, glittering pendants in her ears, while they seemed

suited to the eccentric reputation of her mistress, brought a slight smile to the proud lip of Lady Erpingham, as she conceived them a part of the charlatanries practised by the soothsayer. She only replied to Lady Erpingham's question by an intelligent sign; and running lightly up the stairs, conducted the guest into an anti-room, where she waited but for a few moments before she was admitted into Madame Liehbur's apartment.

The effect that the personal beauty of the diviner always produced on those who beheld her was not less powerful than usual on the surprised and admiring gaze of Lady Erpingham. She bowed her haughty brow with involuntary respect, and took the seat to which the enthusiast beckoned.

“And what, lady,” said the soothsayer, in the foreign music of her low voice, “what brings thee hither? Wouldst thou gain, or

hast thou lost, that gift our poor sex prizes so dearly beyond its value? Is it of love that thou wouldst speak to the interpreter of dreams and the priestess of the things to come?"

While the bright-eyed Liehbur thus spoke, the Countess examined through her veil the fair face before her, comparing it with that description which Godolphin had given her of the sculptor's daughter, and her suspicion acquired new strength.

"I seek not that which you allude to," said Constance, "but of the future; although without any definite object, I would indeed like to question you. All of us love to pry into those dark recesses hid from our view, and over which you profess the empire."

"Your voice is sweet, but commanding," said the oracle; "and your air is stately, as of one born in courts. Lift your veil, that I may gaze upon your face, and tell by its lines the fate your character has shaped for you."

“ Alas ! ” answered Constance, “ life betrays few of its past signs by outward token. If you have no wiser art than that drawn from the lines and features of our countenances, I shall still remain what I am now—an unbeliever in your powers.”

“ The brow, and the lip, and the eye, and the expression of each and all,” answered Liehbur, “ are not the lying index you suppose them.”

“ Then,” rejoined Constance, “ by those signs will I read your own destiny, as you would read mine.”

The sibyl started, and waved her hand impatiently ; but Constance proceeded.

“ Your birth, despite your fair locks, was under a southern sky ; you were nursed in the delusions you now teach ; you were loved, and left alone ; you are in the country of your lover. Is it not so?—am I not an oracle in my turn ? ”

The mysterious Liehbur fell back in her chair ; her lips apart and blanched—her hands clasped—her eyes fixed upon her visitant.

“ Who are you ? ” she cried at last, in a shrill tone ; “ who, of my own sex, knows my wretched history ? Speak, speak !—in mercy speak ! tell me more ! convince me that you have but vainly guessed my secret, or that you have a right to know it ! ”

“ Did not your father forsake, for the blue skies of Rome, his own colder shores ? ” continued Constance, adopting the heightened and romantic tone of the one she addressed ; “ and, Percy Godolphin, is that name still familiar to the ear of Lucilla Volktman ? ”

A loud, long shriek burst from the lips of the soothsayer, and she sank at once lifeless on the ground. Greatly alarmed, and repenting her own abruptness, Constance hastened to her assistance. She lifted the poor

being, whom *she* unconsciously had once contributed so deeply to injure, from the ground: she loosened her dress, and perceived that around her neck hung a broad ivory necklace wrought with curious characters, and many uncouth forms and symbols. This evidence that, if deluding others, the soothsayer deluded herself also, touched and affected the Countess; and while she was still busy in chafing the temples of Lucilla, the Moor, brought to the spot by that sudden shriek, entered the apartment. She seemed surprised and terrified at her mistress's condition, and poured forth, in some tongue unknown to Constance, what seemed to her a volley of mingled reproach and lamentation. She seized Lady Erpingham's hand, dashed it indignantly away, and, supporting herself the ashen cheek of Lucilla, motioned to Lady Erpingham to depart: but Constance, not easily ac-

customed to obey, retained her position beside the still insensible Lucilla; and now, by slow degrees, and with quick and heavy sighs, the unfortunate daughter of Volktman returned to life and consciousness.

In assisting Lucilla, the Countess had thrown aside her veil, and the eyes of the soothsayer opened upon that superb beauty, which, once to see was never to forget. Involuntarily she again closed her eyes, and groaned audibly; and then, summoning all her courage, she withdrew her hand from Constance's clasp, and bade her Moorish handmaid leave them once more alone.

“So, then,” said Lucilla, after a pause, “it is Percy Godolphin's wife, his English wife, who has come to gaze on the fallen, the degraded Lucilla; and yet,” sinking her voice into a tone of ineffable and plaintive sweetness—“yet I have slept on his bosom,

and been dear and sacred to him as thou !
Go, proud lady, go !—leave me to my mad,
and sunken, and solitary state. Go !”

“ Dear Lucilla !” said Constance kindly,
and striving once more to take her hand,
“ do not cast me away from you. I have
long sympathized with your generous although
erring heart—your hard and bitter misfor-
tunes. Look on me only as your friend—
nay, your sister, if you will. Let me per-
suade you to leave this strange and desultory
life ; choose your own home : I am rich to
overflowing ; all you can desire shall be at
your command. *He* shall not know more of
you, unless (to assuage the remorse that the
memory of you does, I know, still occasion
him) you will suffer him to learn, from your
own hand, that you are well and at ease,
and that you do not revoke your former par-
don. Come, dear Lucilla !” and the arm of

the generous and bright-souled Constance gently wound round the feeble frame of Lucilla, who now, reclining back, wept as if her heart would break. “Come, give me the deep, the grateful joy of thinking I can minister to your future comforts. I was the cause of all your wretchedness : but for me, Godolphin would have been yours for ever—would probably, by marriage, have redressed your wrongs ; but for me you would not have wandered an outcast over the inhospitable world. Let me in something repair what I have cost you. Speak to me, Lucilla !”

“Yes, I will speak to you,” said poor Lucilla, throwing herself on the ground, and clasping with grateful warmth the knees of her gentle soother ; “for long, long years—I dare not think how many—I have not heard the voice of kindness fall upon my ear. Among strange faces and harsh tongues hath

my lot been cast ; and if I have wrought out from the dreams of my young hours the course of this life, (which you contemn, but not justly,) it has been that I may stand alone and not dependant ; feared and not despised. And now you, you whom I admire and envy, and would reverence more than living woman, (for he loves you and deems you worthy of him,) you, Lady, speak to me as a sister would speak, and — and —” Here sobs interrupted Lucilla’s speech ; and Constance herself, almost equally affected, and finding it vain to attempt to raise her, knelt by her side, and tenderly caressing her, sought to comfort her, even while she wept in doing so.

And this was a beautiful passage in the life of the lofty Constance ; never did she seem more noble than when, thus lowly and humbling herself, she knelt beside the poor victim of her husband’s love, and whispered to the dis-

eased and withering heart tidings of comfort, charity, home, and a futurity of honour and of peace. But this was not a dream that could long lull the perturbed and erring brain of Lucilla Volktman. And when she recovered, in some measure, her self-possession, she rose, and throwing back the wild hair from her throbbing temples, she said, in a calm and mournful voice :

“ Your kindness comes too late. I am dying, fast—fast. All that is left me in the world are these very visions, this very power—call it delusion if you will—from which you would tear me. Nay, look not so reproachfully, and in such wonder. Do you not know that men have in poverty, sickness, and all outer despair, clung to a creative spirit within—a world peopled with delusions—and called it POETRY ? and that gift has been more precious to them than all that wealth and pomp

could bestow? So," continued Lucilla, with fervid and insane enthusiasm, "so is this, *my* creative spirit, my imaginary world, my inspiration, what poetry may be to others. I may be mistaken in the truth of my belief. There are times—when my brain is cool, and my frame at rest, and I sit alone and think over the *real* past—when I feel my trust shaken, and my ardour damped: but that thought does not console but torture me, and I hasten to plunge once more among the charms, and spells, and mighty dreams, that wrap me from my living self. Oh, lady! bright, and beautiful, and lofty, as you are, there may come a time when you can conceive that even madness may be a relief. For, (and here the wandering light burned brighter in the enthusiast's glowing eyes,) for, when the night is round us, and there is peace on earth, and the world's children sleep, it is a

wild joy to sit alone and vigilant, and forget that we live, and are wretched. The Stars speak to us then with a wondrous and stirring voice; they tell us of the doom of men and the wreck of empires, and prophesy of the far events which they taught to the old Chaldeans. And then the Winds, walking to and fro as they list, bid us go forth with them and hear the songs of the midnight spirits; for you know," she whispered with a smile, putting her hand upon the arm of the appalled and shrinking Constance, who now saw how hopeless was the ministry she had undertaken, "that this world is given up to two tribes of things that live and have a soul; the one bodily and palpable as we are; the other more glorious, but invisible to our dull sight—though I have seen them—dread solemn Shadows, even in their mirth; the night is their season as the day is ours; they march in the moonbeams, and are borne upon the

wings of the winds. And with them, and by their thoughts, I raise myself from what I am and have been. Ah, lady, wouldst thou take this comfort from me?"

"But,"—said Constance, gathering courage from the gentleness which Lucilla's insanity wore, and trying to soothe, not contradict her in her present vein;—"but, in the country, Lucilla, in some quiet and sheltered nook, you might indulge these visions without the cares and uncertainty that must now perplex you; without leading this dangerous and roving life which must at times expose you to insult, to annoyance, and discontent you with yourself."

"You are mistaken, lady," said the astrologer proudly; "none know me who do not fear. I am powerful, and I hug my power—it comforts me: without it, what should I be? an abject, forsaken, miserable woman. No! that power I possess—to shake men's secret souls—even if it be a deceit—even if I should laugh at

them, not pity—reconciles me to myself and to the past. And I am not poor, madam,” as, with the common caprice of her infirmity, an angry suspicion seemed to cross her; “I want no one’s charity—I have learned to maintain myself. Nay, I could be even wealthy if I would!”

“And,” said Constance, seeing that for the present she must postpone her benevolent intentions—“And he—Godolphin—you forgive him still?”

At that name, it was as if a sudden charm had been whispered to the fevered heart of the poor fanatic: her head sank from its proud bearing; a deep, a soft blush coloured the wan cheek; her arms drooped beside her; she trembled violently; and, after a moment’s silence, sank again on her seat and covered her face with her hands. “Ah!” said she softly, “that word brings me back to my young days, when I asked no power but what love gave me over

one heart : it brings me back to the blue Italian lake, and the waving pines, and our solitary home ? and my babe's distant grave. Tell me," she cried, again starting up, " has he not spoken of me lately—has he not seen me in his dreams ? have I not been present to his soul when the frame, torpid and locked, severed us no more, and, in the still hours, I charmed myself to his gaze ? Tell me, has he not owned that Lucilla haunted his pillow ? Tell me ; and if I err, my spells are nothing, my power is vanity, and I am the helpless creature thou wouldst believe me !"

Despite her reason and her firm sense, Constance half shuddered at these mysterious words, as she recalled what Percy had told her of his dreams the preceding evening, and the emotions she herself had witnessed in his slumbers when she watched beside his bed. She remained silent, and Lucilla regarded her countenance with a sort of triumph.

“ My art then is not so idle as thou wouldst hold. But—hush !—last night I beheld him, not in spirit, but visibly, face to face ; for I wander at times before his home (*his* home was once mine !) and he saw me, and was smitten with fear ; in these worn features he could recognize not the *living* Lucilla he had known. But go to him !—thou, his wife, his own—go to him ; tell him—no, tell him *not* of me. He must not seek me : *we* must not hold parley together : for oh, lady,” (and Lucilla’s face became settled into an expression so sad, so unearthly sad, that no word can paint, no heart conceive, its utter and solemn sorrow,) “ when we two meet again to commune, to converse,—when once more I touch that hand, when once more I feel that beloved, that balmy breath ;—*my* last hour is at hand—and danger—imminent, dark, and deadly danger clings fast to *him* !”

As she spoke, Lucilla closed her eyes, as if to

shut some horrid vision from her gaze ; and Constance looked fearfully round, almost expecting some apparition at hand. Presently Lucilla, moving silently across the room, beckoned to the Countess to follow : she did so : they entered another apartment : before a recess there hung a black curtain : Lucilla drew it slowly aside, and Constance turned her eyes from a dazzling light that broke upon them ; when she again looked, she beheld a sort of glass-dial marked with various quaint hieroglyphics and the figures of angels, beautifully wrought ; but around the dial, which was circular, were ranged many stars, and the planets, set in due order. These were lighted from within by some chemical process, and burnt with a clear and lustrous, but silver light. And Constance observed that the dial turned round, and that the stars turned with it, each in a separate motion ; and in the midst of the dial

were the hands as of a clock—that moved, but so slowly, that the most patient gaze alone could observe the motion.

While the wondering Constance regarded this singular device, Lucilla pointed to one star that burnt brighter than the rest; and below it, half way down the dial, was another, a faint and sickly orb, that, when watched, seemed to perform a much more rapid and irregular course than its fellows.

“The bright star is his,” said she, “and yon dim and dying one is the type of mine. Note: in the course they both pursue, they must meet at last; and *when* they meet, the mechanism of the whole halts—the work of the dial is for ever done. These hands indicate hourly the progress made to that end; for it is the mimicry and symbol of mine. Thus do I number the days of my fate; thus do I know, even almost to a second, the period in which I shall join my Father that is in heaven!

“ And now,” continued the maniac, as dropping the curtain, she took her guest’s hand and conducted her back into the outer room—(though *maniac* is too harsh and decided a word for the dreaming wildness of Lucilla’s insanity)—“ and now farewell ! You sought me, and, I feel, only from kind and generous motives. *We* never shall meet more. Tell not your husband that you have seen me. He will know soon, too soon, of my existence : fain would I spare him that pang and,” growing pale as she spoke, “ that *peril* ; but Fate forbids it. What is writ, is writ : and who shall blot God’s sentence from the stars, which are his book ? Farewell ! high thoughts are graved upon your brow : may they bless you ! or, where they fail to bless, may they console and support. Farewell ! I have not yet forgotten to be grateful, and I still dare to pray.”

Thus saying, Lucilla kissed the hand she had held, and turning hastily away, regained

the room she had just left—and locking the door, left the stunned and bewildered Countess to depart from the melancholy abode. With faltering steps she quitted the chamber, and at the foot of the stairs the little Moor awaited her. To her excited fancy there was something eltrich and preternatural in the gaze of the young African, and the grin of her pearly teeth, as she opened the door to the visitant. Hastening to her carriage, which she had left at a corner of the square, the Countess rejoiced when she gained it; and throwing herself back on the luxurious cushion, felt as exhausted by this starry and dreamlike incident in the epic of life's common career, as if she had partaken of that overpowering inspiration which she now almost incredulously asked herself, as she looked forth on the broad day and the busy streets, if she had really witnessed.

CHAPTER XXII.

LUCILLA'S FLIGHT. — THE PERPLEXITY OF LADY ER-
PINGHAM.—A CHANGE COMES OVER GODOLPHIN'S
MIND.—HIS CONVERSATION WITH RADCLYFFE.—GE-
NERAL ELECTION. — BUSTLING SCENE AT THE HOUSE
OF THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.—GODOLPHIN
BECOMES A SENATOR.

No human heart ever beat with more pure
and generous emotions than, when freed from
the political fever that burned within her
(withering, for the moment, the chastened and
wholesome impulses of her nature), beat the
heart of the queenly Constance. She sent that
evening for the most celebrated physician in
London—that polished and courtly man who

seems born for the maladies of the drawing-room, but who, beneath so urbane a demeanour, conceals so accurate and profound a knowledge of the disorders of his unfortunate race. I say accurate and profound comparatively, for positive knowledge of pathology is what no physician in modern times and civilized countries really possesses. No man cures us—the highest art is not to kill! Constance, then, sent for this physician, and, as delicately as possible, related the unfortunate state of Lucilla, and the deep anxiety she felt for her mental and bodily relief. The physician promised to call the next day; he did so, late in the afternoon—Lucilla was gone. Strange, self-willed, mysterious, she came like a dream, to warn, to terrify, and to depart. They knew not whither she had fled, and her Moorish handmaid alone attended her.

Constance was deeply chagrined at this in-

telligence ; for she had already begun to build castles in the air, which poor Lucilla, with a frame restored, and a heart at ease, and nothing left of the past but a soft and holy penitence, should inhabit. The Countess, however, consoled herself with the hope, that Lucilla would at least write to her, and mention her new place of residence ; but days passed, and no letter came.

Constance felt that her benevolent intentions were doomed to be unfulfilled. She was now greatly perplexed whether, or not, to relate to Godolphin, the interview that had taken place between her and Lucilla. She knew the deep, morbid, and painful interest which the memory of this wild and visionary creature created in a breast so prone to moody reflections, as that of Godolphin ; and she trembled at the feelings she might reawaken by even a faint picture of the condition and mental infirmities of her,

whose life he had so darkly shadowed. She resolved, therefore, at all events for the present, and until every hope of discovering Lucilla once more had expired, to conceal the meeting that had occurred. And in this resolve, she was strengthened by perceiving that Godolphin's mind had become gradually calmed from its late excitation, and that he had begun to consider, or at least appeared to consider, the apparition of Lucilla at his window, as the mere delusion of a heated imagination. His nights grew once more tranquil, and freed from the dark dreams that had tormented his brain; and even the cool and unimaginative Constance could scarcely divest herself of the wild fancy that, when Lucilla was near, a secret and preternatural sympathy between Godolphin and the reader of the stars, had produced that influence over his nightly dreams which paled, and receded, and vanished, as Lucilla de-

parted from the actual circle in which he lived.

It was at this time, too, that a change was perceptible in Godolphin's habits, and crept gradually over the character of his thoughts. Dissipation ceased to allure him, the light wit of his parasites palled upon his ear ; magnificence had lost its gloss, and the same fastidious, exacting thirst for the ideal which had disappointed him in the better objects of life began now to discontent him with its glittering pleasures.

The change was natural, and the causes not difficult to fathom. The fact was, that Godolphin had now arrived at that period of existence when a man's character is almost invariably subject to great change ; the crisis in life's fever, when there is a new turn in our fate, and our moral death or regeneration is sealed by the silent wavering, the solemn de-

cision of the HOUR ! Arrived at the confines of middle age, there is an outward innovation of the whole system ; unlooked-for symptoms break forth in the bodily, unlooked-for symptoms in the mental, frame. It happened to Godolphin that, at this critical period, a chance, a circumstance, a straw, had reunited his long interrupted, but never stifled affections to the image of his beautiful Constance. The reign of passion, the magic of those sweet illusions, that ineffable yearning which possession mocks, although it quells at last, were indeed for ever over ; but a friendship more soft and genial than exists in any relation, save that of husband and wife, had sprung up, almost as by a miracle, (so sudden was it,) between breasts for years divided. And the experience of those years had taught Godolphin how hollow, and incomplete, and unsatisfying, had been all the other ties he had so lavishly cultivated. He won-

dered, as sitting alone with Constance, her tenderness recalled the past, her wit enlivened the present, and *his* imagination still shed a glory and a loveliness over the future, that he had been so long insensible to the blessing of that communion which he now experienced. He did not perceive what in fact was the case — that the tastes and sympathies of each, blunted by that disappointment which is the child of experience, were more willing to concede somewhat to the tastes and sympathies of the other ; that Constance gave a more indulgent listening to his beautiful refinements of an ideal and false epicurism ; that he, smiling still, smiled with kindness, not with scorn, at the sanguine politics, the worldly schemes, and the rankling memories of the intriguing Constance. Fortunately, too, for her, the times were such, that men who never before dreamt of political interference, were roused and urged into the

mighty conflux of battling interests, which left few moderate, and none neuter. Every *coterie* resounded with political war-cries; every dinner rang, from the soup to the coffee, with the merits of *the bill*: wherever Godolphin turned for refuge, Reform still assailed him; and by degrees, the universal feeling, that was at first ridiculed, was at last, although reluctantly, admitted by his mind.

“Why,” said he, one day, musingly, to Radclyffe, whom he met in the old Green Park,—(for since the conversation recorded between Radclyffe and Constance, the former came little to Erpingham House,)—“why should I not try a yet *untried* experiment? Why should I not live like others in their graver as in their lighter pursuits? I confess, when I look back to the years I have spent in England, I feel that I calculated erroneously. I chalked out a plan I — have followed

it rigidly. I have lived for self, for pleasure, for luxury; I have summoned wit, beauty, even wisdom, around me. I have been the creator of a magic circle, but to the magician himself the magic was tame and ignoble. In short, I have dreamt, and am awake. Yet what course of life should supply this, which I think of deserting? Shall I go once more abroad, and penetrate some untravelled corner of the earth? Shall I retire into the country, *and write*, draining my mind of the excitement that presses on it; or lastly, shall I plunge with my contemporaries into the 'great gulf' of actual events, and strive, and fret, and struggle?—or—in short, Radclyffe, you are a wise man; advise me!"

"Alas!" answered Radclyffe, "it is of no use advising one to be happy who has no object beyond himself. Either enthusiasm, or utter mechanical coldness, is necessary to reconcile

men to the cares and mortifications of life. You must feel nothing, or you must feel for others. Unite yourself to a great object; see its goal distinctly; cling to its course courageously; hope for its triumph sanguinely; and on its majestic progress you sail, as in a ship, agitated indeed by the storms, but unheeding the breeze and the surge that would appal the individual effort. The larger public objects make us glide smoothly and unfelt over our minor private griefs. To be happy, my dear Godolphin, you must forget yourself. Your refining and poetical temperament preys upon your content. Learn benevolence—it is the only cure to a morbid nature.”

Godolphin was greatly struck by this answer of Radclyffe; the more so, as he had a deep faith in the unaffected sincerity and the calculating wisdom of his adviser. He looked hard in Radclyffe's face, and, after a pause

of some moments, replied, slowly, "I believe you are right after all, and I have learnt, in a few short sentences, the secret of a discontented life."

Godolphin would have sought other opportunities of conversing with Radclyffe, but events soon parted them. Parliament was dissolved! What an historical event is recorded in those words! The moment the King consented to that measure, the whole series of subsequent events became, to an ordinary prescience, clear as in a mirror. Parliament dissolved in the heat of the popular enthusiasm, a majority, a great majority of reformers was sure to be returned. A second Bill passed—would be sent to the Lords; and *they*—who did not see that they, bloated and feeble, impotent yet boastful, must succumb or perish? From that moment the people were safe!

Constance perceived at a glance the whole

train of consequences issuing from that one event; perceived and exulted. A glory had gone from the aristocracy for ever! Her father was already avenged. She heard his scornful laugh ring forth from the depths of his forgotten grave!

London emptied itself at once. England was one election. Godolphin remained almost alone. For the first time a sense of littleness crept over him; a feeling of insignificance, which wounded and galled his vain nature. In these great struggles he was nothing. The admired—the cultivated—the *spirituel*—the splendid Godolphin, sank below the commonest adventurer, the coarsest brawler—yea, the humblest freeman, who felt his stake in the state, joined the canvass, swelled the cry, and helped in the mighty battle between old things and new, which was so determinedly begun. This feeling gave an impetus to the growth of the

new aspirings he had already suffered his mind to generate ; and Constance marked, with vivid delight, that he now listened to her plans with interest, and examined the political field with a curious and searching gaze.

One morning, in walking slowly towards Whitehall, Radclyffe hurried past him.

“ Whither so fast ? ”

“ To Ellice’s, to name the town I start for ; come, perhaps you may be able to assist me.”

Godolphin accepted Radclyffe’s arm, and they walked into that house in Richmond Terrace, which then presented a curious and motley scene, and which, as the starting-post of the victors in the great political race, must always command a certain interest in the eyes of foe or friend to the grand experiment in which educated men were left to see if they could exercise common sense in the choice of a representative.

At that time the calm eye of Godolphin witnessed a moving, restless, exciting spectacle. The two rooms were crowded with various groups talking earnestly, looking heated, wistful, feverish. Here, a deputation persuading a wavering candidate to put himself at once into his carriage and four; there, a Scotch baronet, who was higgling about "the expenses" with a sharp, spectacled lawyer, whose eye was already rolling in search of a less calculating candidate. Here, a man pale and haggard, who had offended his constituents by voting them into Schedule A, and who now trembled lest his political life itself should also be in Schedule A.

Wherever Godolphin looked, there was bustle, interest, excitation. Lords, placemen, adventurers, bankrupts, grey heads, beardless chins, noisy pretenders, modest hesitators — all, mingled together, seemed divided between

general ferment and selfish schemes, each regarding the other at once as a rival and a partizan. At a table sat several men writing away, with their souls in their fingers; and every now and then the great man of the place, the presiding harmonizer of all this chaos, glided across the scene, to be seized by a hundred arms, and whispered by a hundred tongues.

While amused, Godolphin was also a little excited, by this scene. No man can see all around him in a bustle, and be perfectly calm. Every one of his familiars, nodding hurriedly to him, ejaculated, “Ah! Godolphin, and what place do you start for?” and Godolphin grew ashamed at last of replying, “For *no* place.” It was at this moment that a celebrated electioneering agent (of whom Godolphin had some slight previous knowledge in Mr. ——’s other capacity of an attorney) accosted him.

“Can I serve you, Mr. Godolphin? I

know of an excellent seat, close as my fist, in Schedule A. You will have its last; but it dies game: it must *be bled* to death; you understand me, sir!"

"But I suppose there is a canvass?"

"Not at all."

"A dinner?"

"None."

"A journey?"

"To your Banker's."

"Excellent system!" cried Godolphin with energy; "and is it this they are going to abolish? No, Mr. —; I am not looking out for a seat in Parliament, I thank you."

The attorney shuffled off. Godolphin almost repented his resolve; he longed to call the attorney back: the attorney was already in close converse with a young man who seemed infected.

"Just the sort of thing to suit me,"

thought Godolphin ; “ no trouble, no hustings. How it would surprise Constance ; how it would charm her ! After all, it would be a change ; soon bore me, it is true ; but at least I should be in the circle of those vivid interests which are worth examining, if only to laugh at for their ‘ much ado about nothing.’ Well, I was wrong ; I will, for Constance’s sake, close with my legal friend.—Humph !” and Godolphin walked up to the attorney.

“ I beg pardon, sir,” said Mr. —, still clinging to the button of the young gentleman ; “ in an instant.”

“ Not an instant,” said Godolphin.

Mr. — reluctantly turned aside.

“ Mr. —, your price ?”

“ Three thousand pounds.”

“ What, only for a few months ?”

“ So snug ; not a journey, recollect.”

“ True: you shall have the money.”

“ Booked !” cried the lawyer, bowing.

“ Will things be managed as comfortably in a Reformed Parliament ?” thought Godolphin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW VIEWS OF A PRIVILEGED ORDER.—SALTREAM.—
THE DEATH-BED OF AUGUSTUS SAVILLE.

THIS event might indeed have been an era in the life of Percy Godolphin, had that life been spared to a more extended limit than it was; and yet, so long had his ambition been smoothed and polished away by his peculiarities of thought, and so little was his calm and indifferent tone of mind suited to the hot contests and nightly warfare of Parliamentary politics, that it is not probable he would ever have won a continuous and solid distinc-

tion in a career which requires either obtuseness of mind, or enthusiasm of purpose, to encounter the repeated mortifications and failures which the most brilliant debutant ordinarily endures. As it was, however, it produced a grave and solemn train of thought in Godolphin's breast. He mused much over his past life, and the musing did not satisfy him: he saw himself living amidst vast events; should he continue to take no share in them? He felt like one of those recorded in Physiological history, who have been in a trance for years; and now slowly awakening, he acknowledged the stir and rush of revived but confused emotions. Nature, perhaps, had intended Godolphin for a poet; for, with the exception of the love of glory, the poetical characteristics were rife within him; and over his whole past existence the dimness of unexpressed poetical sensation had clung and hovered. It was this which had

deadened his soul to the active world, and wrapped him in the land of dreams; it was this which had induced that vague and restless dissatisfaction with the actual which had brought the thirst for the ideal; it was this which had made him fastidious in love, repining in pleasure, magnificent in luxury, seeking and despising all things in the same breath. There are many, perhaps, of this sort who, having the poet's nature, have never found the poet's vent to his emotions; have wandered over the visionary world without chancing to discover the magic wand that was stored within the dim chamber of their mind, and would have reduced the visions into shape and substance. Alas! what existence can be more unfulfilled, than that of one who has the soul of the poet and not the skill? who has the susceptibility and the craving, not the consolation or the reward?

But if this cloud of dreamlike emotion had

so long hung over Godolphin, it began now to melt away from his heart ; a clearer and distincter view of the large objects of life lay before him ; and he felt that he was standing, half stunned and passive, in the great crisis of his fate.

Constance was in a perfect fever of joy and exultation at Godolphin's formal, although, as yet, nominal, entry into that public life, which to her seemed so noble a career ; and in her vivid congratulation to herself and to him, Godolphin satisfied his doubting reason that he had rightly decided.

London was now made dull and empty, by the outpourings for the general election ; and amidst the heat and bustle, and commotion and turmoil, that reigned over the "Times"-reading few that remained in town, there was little to charm even the ardent Constance. They resolved to go into ——shire ; and, according to Godolphin's promise, to revisit, for the first

time since their marriage, the stately courts of Wendover.

On the day previous to their departure, a heavy and unaccountable gloom took possession of Godolphin's mind. The day was unusually bright and sunny, and yet the air had a taste of freshness, that prevented the warmth from being oppressive: it seemed a day that would have lightened the blood of the most ascetic; but its influence touched not the spirit of Godolphin. He walked along the streets in a listless reverie, until he found himself by the house of Lord Saltream. "I will go in and take leave of my strange friend," thought Percy; and while he was pausing by the door, and the scent of the flowers from the graceful balconies above floated down, Lord Saltream himself came suddenly forth, brushing against Godolphin without appearing even to see him.

"Whither so fast, Saltream?" said Percy.

Lord Saltream halted. "Ah, is it you? were you going to call on me? Pray go in; let me see—you are to dine with me, eh! it is not eight yet?"

"It is not three," said Godolphin, laughing.

"Not three? God bless me! Thus it is," answered the Earl, with a very peculiar and earnest expression of countenance, "thus it is we behave to our Great Destroyer. What disrespect to such a power! To forget him who never forgets us; to neglect Time, who is eternally griping, and gnawing, and eating away our existence! Is it not an odd phrase, by the way—'to *kill* Time?'—kill that which is our universal slaughterer? But, tell me, what news?"

"No news but the one cry—the triumph of the Reform."

"Well, I have been a half-sort of Liberal all my life, and I am now suddenly left behind by

all my co-partners; men who used to upbraid me for being *too* Whig. Is it not strange? In fact, I and my old friends put me in mind of the child's game, 'Puss in the corner.' Those who are in place are sleek and contented; and it is poor I, left in the middle, who think things might be better arranged. After all, what a mad project this Reform is!"

"*You* certainly won't have a better house, or a finer library, or an easier life, under the new bill," said Godolphin.

"Irony! Very well, I dare say that's an excellent argument; but mark! the Whigs are playing with dangerous tools;" and herewith Lord Saltream entered into a political diatribe which our readers, surfeited with politics, may well be spared. In reply to the old cry of the "working well," Godolphin pointed the Earl's reluctant attention to the fearful poverty of the great mass of the people; "And," added he, "af-

ter all, Saltream, let us look to ourselves—the ‘lilies that toil not.’ Are we really so happy under these old distinctions, these graven demarcations of society, that we should dread even the realization of the wildest wishes of the most absolute leveller himself? For my part, I think we are in the character of the Theatrical Monopolist; we make a great show; we exhibit a vast splendour! we are wealthy in robes and painted gewgaws; but our state is unsound, our monopoly itself has ruined us. Who amongst us has ever had a fair and wholesome field for his talents? Have not our minds been choked up by the parasite customs round us? Where is our healthful ambition, where our great moral purpose? Are we not condemned, by the circumstances that hedge us in, to a sickly and unsatisfying life; to a pleasure that enervates; to trifles that debase; to a pomp that dejects us, from its heartlessness? Come, Salt-

ream, answer me. You, above all men, are singled out and honoured by aristocratic distinctions: all that the present system can give is your's—unbounded wealth, exalted station, wit, genius, learning, political repute, the power of gathering around you all that men most covet. Are you happy? Is not satiety the inevitable lot of such indolent facilities of enjoyment? Would a change even in your proud lot be really so dreadful? Are you sure that humbler fortunes would bring less gratification?"

Lord Saltream seemed struck by the question: he penetrated at once into all the consequences that might be drawn from his answer, and remained silent for a few moments. At length he said,

"But I, Godolphin, am of a peculiar temperament; my frame is not strong; if I am unhappy, the causes are physical, not moral."

“ But if the majority of us make the same reply, would there not be something suspicious in that moral state which allows so many instances of discontent, even from physical causes ?”

“ They tell me,” said Saltream, without appearing to have heard the last question, and speaking to himself in an under tone, “ they tell me I have no heart :—certainly, I don’t experience warm affections—that is very true ; but I am altogether, mind and frame, nipped and blighted prematurely. Yes, I have learning, (Godolphin did not flatter)—and I have wealth, and I have rank too—but so has Lord Londonderry ; and any woman I give ten thousand pounds to, swears she loves me. But all this is hollow, very hollow ; hollow as Rogers, and as bitter. No heart ! very likely ; but who has ? The world is not a living animal : it is a piece of clockwork : it is moved by a mecha-

nism, and not by the gushing veins. Shall I ask Godolphin to dinner, and *talk wise* to him? No, I'll go home and think. Think?—ay!" Then suddenly seeming to recollect Godolphin was present, the singular soliloquist said aloud:—"By the by, I believe you are married, Godolphin?—ay, to be sure.—Do you recommend me to marry? I have serious thoughts of it."

"Yes, marry," said Godolphin, laconically.

• "Marry!—and why?"

"Recollect the flappers in Laputa. You require a flapper; and a wife will be sure not to neglect that office."

"A sensible remark, a sensible remark!—Good-day to you, Godolphin.—By the by, I hope you subscribe against the Radicals?—Good-day!"

Godolphin's quiet eye followed the strange, shambling, abstracted figure of the Earl as he hurried on. "Yes," thought he, "there is

more in that man's position, that ought to teach us to put life under strict control, than in all Radclyffe's lofty reasonings."

The impression made on Godolphin by the above conference was followed up in the evening by a more melancholy one. Saville was taken alarmingly ill; Godolphin was sent for. He found the *soi-disant* Epicurean at the point of death, but in perfect possession of his senses. The scene around him was emblematic of his life: save Godolphin, not a friend was by. Saville had some dozen or two of natural children—where were they? He had abandoned them to their fate: he knew not of their existence, nor they of his death. Lonely in his selfishness was he left to breathe out the small soul of a man of *bon ton*! But I must do Saville the justice to say, that if he was without the mourners and the attendants that belong to the natural ties, he did not require

them. His was no whimpering exit from life: the champagne was drained to the last drop; and Death, like the true boon companion, was about to shatter the empty glass.

“Well, my friend,” said Saville, feebly, but pressing with weak fingers Godolphin’s hand,—“well, the game is up, the lights are going out, and presently the last guest will depart, and all be darkness!” Here the doctor came to the bedside with a cordial. The dying man, before he took it, fixed upon the leech an eye which, although fast glazing, still retained something of its keen, searching shrewdness.

“Now, tell me, my good sir, how many hours more can you keep in this—this breath?”

The doctor looked at Godolphin.

“I understand you,” said Saville; “you are shy on these points. Never be shy, my good fellow, it is inexcusable after twenty; besides, it is a bad compliment to my nerves; a gentle-

man is prepared for every event. Sir, it is only a *roturier* whom death, or any thing else, takes by surprise. How many hours, then, can I live?"

"Not many, I fear, sir: perhaps, until day-break."

"*My* day breaks about twelve o'clock P. M." said Saville, as drily as his gasps would let him. "Very well;—give me the cordial;—don't let me go to sleep—I don't want to be cheated out of a minute. So, so! I am better. You may withdraw, doctor. Let my spaniel come up. Bustle, Bustle!—poor fellow! poor fellow! Lie down, sir! be quiet! And now, Godolphin, a few words in farewell. I always liked you greatly; you know you were my *protégé*, and you have turned out well. You have not been led away by the vulgar *bourgeois* passions of politics, and place, and power. You have had power over power itself; you have

not office, but you have fashion. You have made the greatest match in England; very prudently not marrying Constance Vernon, very prudently marrying Lady Erpingham. You are at the head and front of society; you have excellent taste, and spend your wealth properly. All this must make your conscience clear—a wonderful consolation! Always keep a sound conscience, it is a great blessing on one's death-bed—it is a great blessing to me in this hour, for I have played my part decently—eh? I have enjoyed life, as much as so dull a possession can be enjoyed; I have loved, gamed, drunk, but I have never lost my character as a gentleman: thank Heaven, I have no remorse of that sort! Follow my example to the last, and you will die as easily. I have left you my correspondence and my journal: you may publish them, if you like; if not, burn them. They are full of amusing anecdotes; but I

don't care for fame, as you well know — especially posthumous fame. Do as you please, then, with my literary remains. Take care of my dog — 'tis a good creature ; and let me be quietly buried. No bad taste — no ostentation — no epitaph. I am very glad I die before the d——d Revolution that must come : I don't want to take wine with the Member for Holborn Bars. You think differently : with all my heart : toleration is a gentleman's motto. I am a type of a system : I expire before the system : my death is the herald of its fall."

With these expressions — not continuously uttered, but at short intervals—Saville turned away his face : his breathing became thick, he fell into the slumber he had deprecated : and, after about an hour's silence, died away as insensibly as an infant. *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

The first living countenance beside the death-bed, on which Godolphin's eye fell, was that

of Fanny Millinger; she (who had been much with Saville during his latter days, for her talk amused him, and her good-nature made her willing to amuse any one,) had been, at his request, summoned also with Godolphin at the sudden turn of his disease. She was at the theatre at the time, and had only just arrived when the deceased had fallen into his last sleep. There, silent and shocked, she stood by the bed, opposite Godolphin. She had not stayed to change her stage-dress; and the tinsel and mock jewels glittered on the revolted eye of her quondam lover. What a type of the life just extinguished! What a satire on its mountebank artificialities!

Some little time after, she joined Godolphin in the desolate apartment below. She put her hand in his, and her tears—for she wept easily—flowed fast down her cheeks, washing away the lavish rouge which imperfectly masked the

wrinkles that Time had lately begun to sow on a surface Godolphin had remembered so fair and smooth.

“Poor Saville!” said she, falteringly, “he died without a pang. Ah! he had the best temper possible.”

Godolphin sate by the writing-table of the deceased, shading his brow with the hand which the actress left disengaged.

“Fanny,” said he, bitterly, after a pause, “the world is indeed a stage. It has lost a consummate actor, though in a small part.”

The saying was wrung from Godolphin—and was not said unkindly, though it seemed so—for he too had tears in his eyes.

“Ah,” said she, “the play-house has indeed taught us, in our youth, many things which the real world could not teach us better.”

“Life differs from the play only in this,”

said Godolphin, some time afterwards; "it has no plot — all is vague, desultory, unconnected—till the curtain drops with the mystery unsolved."

Those were the last words that Godolphin ever addressed to the actress.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOURNEY AND THE SURPRISE — A WALK IN THE
SUMMER NIGHT — THE STARS AND THE ASSOCIATION
THAT MEMORY MAKES WITH NATURE.

THIS event detained Godolphin some days longer in town. He saw the last rites performed to Saville, and he was present at the opening of the will.

As in life Saville had never lent a helping hand to the distressed, as he had mixed with the wealthy only, so now to the wealthy only was his wealth devoted. The rich Godolphin was his principal heir; not a word was even said about his illegitimate children, not an in-

quiry ordained towards his poor relations. In this, as in all the formula of his will, Saville followed the prescribed customs of the world.

Fast went the panting steeds that bore Constance and Godolphin from the desolate city. Bright was the summer sky, and green looked the smiling fields that lay on either side their road. Nature was awake and active. What a delicious contrast to the scenes of Art they left behind ! Constance exerted herself to the utmost to cheer the spirits of her companion, and succeeded : in the small compass which confined them together, their conversation flowed in confidence and intimate affection. Not since the first month of their union had they talked with less reserve and more entire love—only there was this difference in their topics ; they then talked of the future only, they now talked more of the past. They uttered many a fond regret over their several faults to each

other ; and, with clasped hands, congratulated themselves on their present reunion of heart. They allowed how much all things independent of affection had deceived them, and no longer exacting so much from love, they felt its real importance. Ah, why do all of us lose so many years in searching after happiness, but never enquiring into its nature ! We are like one who collects the books of a thousand tongues, and, knowing not their language, wonders why they do not delight him !

But still athwart the mind of Constance one dark image would ever and anon obtrude itself ; the solitary and mystic Lucilla, with her erring brain and forlorn fortunes, was not even in happiness to be forgotten. There were times, too, in that short journey, when she felt the tale of her interview with that unhappy being rise to her lips ; but ever when she looked on

the countenance of Godolphin, beaming with more heartfelt and home-born gladness than she had seen for years, she could not bear the thought of seeing it darkened by the pain her story would inflict—and she shrank from embittering moments so precious to her heart.

All her endeavours to discover Lucilla had been in vain; but an unquiet presentiment that at any moment that discovery might be made, perhaps in the presence of Godolphin, constantly haunted her, and she even now looked painfully forth at each inn where they changed horses, lest the sad, stern features of the soothsayer should appear, and break that spell of happy quiet which now lay over the spirit of Godolphin.

It was towards the evening that their carriage slowly wound up a steep and long ascent. The sun yet wanted an hour to its setting, and at their right, its slant and mel-

lowed beams fell over rich fields, green with the prodigal luxuriance of June, and intersected by hedges from which, proud and frequent, the oak and elm threw forth their lengthened shadows. On their left, the grass less fertile, and the spaces less enclosed, were whitened with flocks of sheep; and far and soft came the bleating of the lambs upon their ear. They saw not the shepherd, nor any living form; but from between the thicker groups of trees, the chimneys of peaceful cottages peered forth, and gave to the pastoral serenity of the scene that still and tranquil aspect of life which alone suited it. The busy wheel in the heart of Constance was at rest, and Godolphin's soul, steeped in the luxury of the present hour, felt that dreamlike happiness which would be heaven could it *outlive* the hour.

“My Constance,” whispered he, “why, since we return at last to these scenes, why should

we ever leave them? Amidst them let us recall our youth!"—Constance sighed, but with pleasure, and pressed Godolphin's hand to her lips.

And now they had gained the hill, a sudden colour flushed over Godolphin's cheek.

"Surely," said he, "I remember this view. Yonder valley! This is not the road to Wenderover Castle; this,—my father's home!—the same, and not the same!"

Yes! Below, basking in the western light, lay the cottage in which Godolphin's childhood had been passed. There was the stream rippling merrily; there the broken and fern-clad turf with "its old hereditary trees;" but the ruins!—the shattered arch, the mouldering tower, were left indeed—but new arches, new turrets had arisen, and so dextrously blended with the whole that Godolphin might have fancied the hall of his forefathers restored—not indeed in the same

vast proportions and cumbrous grandeur as of old, but still alike in shape and outline, and such even in size as would have contented the proud heart of its last owner. Godolphin's eyes turned inquiringly to Constance.

"It should have been more consistent with its antient dimensions," said she, "but then it would have taken half our lives to have built it."

"But this must have been the work of years."

"It was."

"And *your* work, Constance?"

"For you."

"And it was for this, that you hesitated when I asked you to consent to raising the money for the purchase of Lord ——'s collection?"

"Yes ;—am I forgiven?"

"Dearest Constance," said Godolphin, flinging his arms around her, "how have I wronged

you ! During those very years, then, of our estrangement — during those very years I thought you indifferent, you were silently preparing this noble revenge on the injury I did you. Why, why did I not know this before ? why did you not save us both from so long a misunderstanding of each other ?”

“Dearest Percy, I was to blame ; but I always looked to this hour as to a pleasure of which I could not bear to rob myself. I always fancied that when this task was finished, and you could witness it, you would feel how uppermost you always were in my thoughts, and forgive me many faults from that consideration. I knew that I was executing your father’s great wish ; I knew that you always, although unconsciously perhaps, sympathized in that wish. I only grieve that, as yet, it has been executed so imperfectly.”

“But how,” continued Godolphin, gazing

on the new pile as they now neared the entrance, "how was it this never reached my ears through other quarters?"

"But it did, Percy; don't you remember our country neighbour, Dartmour, complimenting you on your intended improvements, and you fancied it was irony, and turned your back on the discomfited squire?"

They now drove under the gates surmounted with Godolphin's arms; and, in a few minutes more, they were within the renovated halls of the Priory.

Perhaps it was impossible for Constance to have more sensibly touched and flattered Godolphin than by this surprise; for his early poverty had produced in him somewhat of that ancestral pride which the poor only can gracefully wear; and although the tie between his father and himself had not possessed much endearment, yet he had often, with the genero-

sity that belonged to him, regretted that his parent had not survived to share in his present wealth, and to devote some portion of it to the realization of those wishes which he had never been permitted to consummate. Godolphin, too, was precisely of a nature to appreciate the delicacy of Constance's conduct, and to be deeply penetrated by the thought that, while he was following a career so separate from her's, she, in the midst of all her ambitious projects, could pause to labour, unthanked and in concealment, for the delight of this hour's gratification to him: the delicacy and the forethought affected him the more, because they made not a part of the ordinary character of the high and absorbed ambition of Constance. He did not thank her much by words, but his looks betrayed all he felt, and Constance was over-paid.

Although the new portion of the building

was necessarily not extensive, yet each chamber was of those grand proportions which suited the magnificent taste of Godolphin, and harmonized with the ancient ruins. Constance had shown her tact by leaving the ruins themselves (which it was profane to touch) unrestored; but so artfully were those connected with the modern addition, and thence with the apartments in the cottage, which she had not scrupled to remodel, that an effect was produced from the whole far more splendid than many Gothic buildings of greater extent and higher pretensions can afford. Godolphin wandered delightedly over the whole, charmed with the taste and judgment which presided over even the nicest arrangement.

“Why, where,” said he, struck with the accurate antiquity of some of the details, “where learned you all these minutiae? You are as wise as Hope himself upon cornices and tables.”

“ I was forced to leave these things to others,” answered Constance ; “ but I took care that they possessed the necessary science.”

The night was exceedingly beautiful, and they walked forth under the summer moon among those grounds in which Constance had first seen Godolphin. They stood by the very rivulet—they paused on the very spot ! On the murmuring bosom of the wave floated many a water-flower ; and now and then a sudden splash, a sudden circle in the shallow stream, denoted the leap of the river tyrant on his prey. There was an universal odour on the soft air ; that delicate, that ineffable fragrance belonging to those midsummer nights which the rich English poetry might well people with Oberon and his fairies : the bat wheeled in many a ring along the air ; but the gentle light bathed all things, and robbed his wanderings of the gloomier associations

that belong to them; and ever, and ever, the busy moth darted to and fro among the flowers, or, misled upward by the stars whose beam allured it, wandered, like desire after happiness, in search of that light it might never reach. And those stars still, with their soft, unspeakable eyes of love, looked down upon Godolphin as of old, when, by the Italian lake, he roved with her for whom he had become the world itself. No, not now, nor ever, could he gaze upon those wan, mysterious orbs, and not feel the pang that reminded him of Lucilla! Between them and her was an affinity which his imagination could not sever. Every one that we have loved has something in nature especially devoted to their memory; a peculiar flower, a breath of air, a leaf, a tone. What love is without some such association,

“ Striking the electric chain wherewith we’re bound.”

But the dim, and shadowy, and solemn stars were indeed meet remembrancers of Volktman's wild daughter; and so intimately was their light connected, in Godolphin's breast, with that one image, that their very softness had, to his eyes, something fearful and menacing—although as in sadness, not in anger.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FULL RENEWAL OF LOVE.—HAPPINESS PRODUCES FEAR, “AND IN TO-DAY ALREADY WALKS TO MORROW.”

OH, first love! well sang the gay minstrel of France, that we return again and again to thee. As the earth returns to its spring, and is green once more, we go back to the life of life, and forget the seasons that have rolled between! Whether it was—perhaps so—that in the minds of both was a feeling, that their present state was not fated to endure; whether they felt, in the deep calm they enjoyed, that the storm was already at hand; whether

this was the truth I know not ; but certain it was, that during the short time they remained at Godolphin Priory, previous to their earthly separation, Constance and Godolphin felt rather like lovers for the first time united, than like those who have dragged on the chain for years. Their perfect solitude, the absence of all intrusion, so unlike the life they had long passed, renewed all that charm, that rapture in each other's society which belongs to the first youth of love. True, that this could not have endured long ; but Fate suffered it to endure to the last of that tether which remained to their union. Constance was not again doomed to the severe and grating shock which the sense of estrangement brings to a woman's heart ; she was sensible that Godolphin was never so entirely, so passionately her own as towards the close of their mortal connection ; everything around them breathed of their

first love. This was that home of Godolphin's to which, from the splendid halls of Wendover, the young soul of the proud orphan had so often and so mournfully flown with a yearning and wistful interest: this was that spot in which he, awaking from the fever of the world, had fed his first dreams of *her*. The scene, the solitude, was as a bath to their love; it braced, it freshened, it revived its tone. They wandered, they read, they thought together: the air of the spot was an intoxication. The world around and without was agitated; they felt it not: the breakers of the great deep died in murmurs on their ear. Ambition lulled its voice to Constance; Godolphin had realized his visions of the ideal. Time had dimmed their young beauty, but their eyes saw it not; they were young, they were all beautiful, to each other.

And Constance hung on the steps of her lover

—still let that name be his! She could not bear to lose him for a moment: a vague indistinctness of fear seized her if she saw him not. Again and again, in the slumbers of the night, she stretched forth her arms to feel that he was near; all her pride, her coldness, seemed gone, as by a spell; she loved as the softest, the fondest love. Are we, O Ruler of the future! imbued with the half-felt spirit of prophecy as the hour of evil approaches—the great, the fierce, the irremediable evil of a life? In this depth and intensity of their renewed passion, was there not something preternatural? Did they not tremble as they loved? They were on a spot to which the dark waters were slowly gathering; they clung to the Hour, for Eternity was lowering round.

It was one evening that a foreboding emotion of this kind weighed heavily on Constance.

She pressed Godolphin's hand in her's, and when he returned the pressure, she threw herself on his neck, and burst into tears. Godolphin was alarmed; he covered her cheek with kisses, he sought the cause of her emotion.

"There is no cause," answered Constance, recovering herself, but speaking in a faltering voice, "only I feel the impossibility that this happiness can last; its excess makes me shudder!"

As she spoke, the wind rose and swept mournfully over the large leaves of the chesnut-tree beneath which they stood: the serene stillness of the evening seemed gone; an unquiet and melancholy spirit was loosened abroad, and the chill of the sudden change which is so frequent to our climate, came piercingly upon them. Godolphin was silent for some moments, for the thought found a sympathy in his own.

“ And is it truly so ? ” he said at last ; “ is there really to be no permanent happiness for us below ? Is the pain always to tread the heels of pleasure ? Are we never to say, the harbour is reached, and we are safe ? No, my Constance,” he added, warming into the sanguine vein that traversed even his most despondent moods, “ no ! let us not cherish this dark belief ; there is no experience for the future ; one hour lies to the next : if what has been seem thus chequered, it is no type of what may be. We have discovered in each other that world that was long lost to our eyes ; we cannot lose it again : death only can separate us ! ”

“ Ah, *death* ! ” said Constance, shuddering.

“ Do not recoil at that word, my Constance, for we are yet in the noon of life ; why bring, like the Egyptian, the spectre to the feast ? And, after all, if death come while we

thus love, it is better than change and time—better than custom which palls—better than age which chills. Oh !” continued Godolphin passionately, “oh ! if this narrow shoal and sand of time be but a breathing-spot in the great heritage of immortality, why cheat ourselves with words so vague as life and death ! What is the difference ? At most, the entrance in and the departure from one scene in our wide career. How many scenes are left to us ! We do but hasten our journey, not close it. Let us believe this, Constance, and cast from us all fear of our disunion.”

As he spoke, Constance’s eyes were fixed upon his face, and the deep calm that reigned there sank into her soul, and silenced its murmurs. The thought of futurity is that which Godolphin (because it is so with all idealists) must have revolved with the most frequent fervour ; but it was a thought that he so

rarely touched upon, that it was the first and only time Constance ever heard it breathed from his lips.

They turned into the house ; and the mark is still in that page of the volume which they read where the melodious accents of Godolphin died upon the heart of Constance. Can she ever turn to it again ?

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST CONVERSATION BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND
CONSTANCE—HIS THOUGHTS AND SOLITARY WALK
AMIDST THE SCENES OF HIS YOUTH—THE LETTER
—THE DEPARTURE.

THEY had denied themselves to all the visitors that had attacked the Priory ; but on their first arrival, they had deemed it necessary to conciliate their neighbours by concentrating into one formal act of hospitality all those social courtesies which they could not persuade themselves to relinquish their solitude in order singly to perform. Accordingly, a day had been fixed for one grand fête at the Priory ; it

was to follow close on the election, and be considered as in honour of that event. The evening for this gala succeeded that which I have recorded in the last chapter. It was with great reluctance that they prepared themselves to greet this sole interruption of their seclusion; and they laughed, although they did not laugh cordially, at the serious annoyance which the giving a ball was for the first time to occasion to persons who had been almost doing nothing else but giving balls for a succession of years.

The day was remarkably still and close: the sun had not once pierced through the dull atmosphere, which was charged with the yet silent but gathering thunder; and as the evening came on, the sullen tokens of an approaching storm became more and more loweringly pronounced.

“We shall not, I fear, have propitious weather for our festival to-night,” said Godolphin;

“but after a general election, people’s nerves are tolerably hardened: what are the petty fret and tumult of nature, lasting but an hour, to the angry and everlasting passions of men?”

“A profound deduction from a wet night, dear Percy,” said Constance, smiling.

“Like our friend C——,” rejoined Godolphin, in the same vein, “I can philosophise on the putting on one’s gloves, you know;” and therewith their conversation flowed into a vein singularly contrasted with the character of the coming events. Time fled on as they were thus engaged, until Constance started up, surprised at the lateness of the hour, to attend the duties of the toilette.

“Wear this, dearest,” said Godolphin, taking a rose from a flower-stand by the window, “in memory of that ball at Wendover castle, which, although itself passed bitterly enough for me, has yet left so many happy

recollections." Constance put the rose into her bosom ; its leaves were then all fresh and brilliant—so were her prospects for the future. He kissed her forehead as they parted ;—they parted for the last time.

Godolphin, left alone, turned to the window, which, opening to the ground, invited him forth among the flowers that studded the grass-plots which sloped away to the dark and unwavering trees that girded the lawn. That pause of nature which precedes a storm ever had a peculiar attraction to his mind ; and instinctively he sauntered from the house, wrapped in the dreaming, half-developed thought which belonged to his temperament. Mechanically he strayed on until he found himself beside the still lake which the hollows of the dismantled park embedded. There he paused, gazing unconsciously on the gloomy shadows which fell from the arches of the Priory and the tall trees

around. Not a ripple stirred the broad expanse of waters; the birds had gone to rest; no sound, save the voice of the distant brook that fed the lake beside which, on the first night of his return to his ancestral home, he had wandered with Constance, broke the universal silence. That voice was never mute. All else might be dumb; but that living stream, rushing through its rocky bed, stilled not its re-pining music. Like the soul of the landscape is the gush of a fresh stream; it knows no sleep, no pause; it works for ever—the life, the cause of life, to all around. The great frame of nature may repose, but the spirit of the waters rests not for a moment. As the soul of the landscape is the soul of man, in our deepest slumbers its course glides on, and works unsilent, unslumbering, through its destined channel.

With slow step and folded arms Godolphin

moved on. The well-remembered scenes of his childhood were all before him : the wild verdure of the fern, the broken ground, with its thousand mimic mounts and valleys, the deep dell overgrown with matted shrubs and dark as a wizard's cave ; the remains of many a stately vista, where the tender green of the lime showed soft, even in that dusky light, beneath the richer leaves of the chesnut ; all was familiar and home-breathing to his mind. Fragments of boyish verse, forgotten for years, rose hauntingly to his remembrance, telling of wild thoughts, unsatisfied dreams, disappointed hopes.

“ But I am happy at last,” said he aloud, “ yes, happy. I have passed that bridge of life which divides us from the follies of youth ; and better prospects, and nobler desires, extend before me. What a world of wisdom in that one saying of Radclyffe's, ‘ Benevolence is the

sole cure to idealism ;' to live for others draws us from demanding miracles for ourselves. What duty as yet have I fulfilled ? I renounced ambition as unwise, and with it I renounced wisdom itself. I lived for pleasure—I lived the life of disappointment. Without one vicious disposition, I have fallen into a hundred vices ; I have never been *actively* selfish, yet always selfish. I nursed high thoughts—for what end ? A poet in heart, a voluptuary in life. If mine own interest came into clear collision with that of another, mine I would have sacrificed, but I never asked if the whole course of my existence was not that of a war with the universal interest. Too thoughtful to be without a leading principle in life, the one principle I adopted has been one error. I have tasted all that imagination can give to earthly possession ; youth, health, liberty, knowledge, love, luxury, pomp.

Woman was my first passion,—what woman have I wooed in vain? I imagined that my career hung upon Constance's breath—Constance loved and refused me. I attributed my errors to that refusal; Constance became mine—how have I retrieved them? A vague, a dim, an unconfessed remorse has pursued me in the memory of Lucilla; yet why not have redeemed that fault to her by good to others? What is penitence not put into action, but the great fallacy in morals? A sin to one if irremediable, can only be compensated by a virtue to some one else. And was I to blame in my conduct to Lucilla? Why should conscience so haunt me at that name? Did I not fly her—was it not herself who compelled our union? Did I not cherish, respect, honour, forbear with her, more than I have since, with my wedded Constance? Did I not resolve to renounce Constance herself, when most loved, for Lu-

cilla's sake alone? Who prevented that sacrifice—who deserted me—who carved out her own separate life?—Lucilla herself. No, so far, my sin is light. But ought I not to have left all things to follow her, to discover her, to force upon her an independence from want, or possibly crime? Ah, there was my sin, and the sin of my nature; the sin, too, of the children of the world—*passive sin*. I could sacrifice my happiness, but not my indolence; I was not ungenerous, I was inert. But is it too late? can I not yet search, discover her, and remove from my mind the anxious burthen which her remembrance imposes on it? For oh, one thought of remorse linked with the being who has loved us, is more intolerable to the conscience than the gravest crime!"

Muttering such thoughts, Godolphin strayed on until the deepening night suddenly recalled his attention to the lateness of the hour. He

turned to the house, and entered his own apartment. Several of the guests had already come. Godolphin was yet dressing, when a servant knocked at the door and presented him a note.

“Lay it on the table,” said he to the valet ;
“it is probably some excuse about the ball.”

“Sir,” said the servant, “a lad has just brought it from S——,” naming a village about four miles distant ; “and says he is to wait for an answer. He was ordered to ride as fast as possible.”

With some impatience Godolphin took up the note ; but the moment his eye rested on the writing, it fell from his hands ; his cheek, his lips, grew as white as death ; his heart seemed to refuse its functions ; it was literally as if life stood still for a moment, as by the force of a sudden poison. With a strong effort he recovered himself, tore open the note, and read as follows :

“Percy Godolphin, the hour has arrived—once more we shall meet. I summon you, fair love, to that meeting—the bed of death. Come!

“LUCILLA VOLKTMAN.”

“Don’t alarm the Countess,” said Godolphin to his servant, in a very low calm voice; “bring my horse to the postern, and send the bearer of this note to me.”

The messenger appeared—a rough, country lad of about eighteen or twenty.

“You brought this note?”

“I did, your honour.”

“From whom?”

“Why, a sort of a strange lady, as is lying at the ‘Chequers,’ and not expected to live. She be mortal bad, sir, and do run on awesome.”

Godolphin pressed his hands convulsively together.

“ And how long has she been there ? ”

“ She only came about two hours since, sir ; she came in a chaise, sir, and was taken so ill that we sent for the doctor directly. He say she can't get over the night.”

Godolphin walked to and fro, without trusting himself to speak, for some minutes. The boy stood by the door, pulling about his hat, and wondering, and staring, and thoroughly stupid.

“ Did she come alone ? ”

“ Eh, your honour ? ”

“ Was no one with her ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! a little nigger girl : she it was sent me with the letter.”

“ The horse is ready, sir,” said the servant ;
“ but had you not better have the carriage brought out ? It looks very black ; it must rain shortly, sir ; and the ford between this and S—— is dangerous to cross in so dark a night.”

“ Peace ! ” cried Godolphin, with flashing

eyes and a low, convulsive laugh. "Shall I ride to that death-bed at my ease and leisure?"

He strode rapidly down the stairs, and reached the small postern door: it was a part of the old building: one of the grooms held his impatient horse—the swiftest in his splendid stud; and the dim, but flaring light, held by another of the servitors, streamed against the dull heavens and the imperfectly seen and frowning ruins of the ancient pile.

Godolphin, unconscious of all around, and muttering to himself, leaped on his steed: the fire glinted from the courser's hoofs; and thus the last lord of that knightly race bade farewell to his fathers' halls. Those words which he had muttered, and which his favourite servant caught and superstitiously remembered, were the words in Lucilla's note—" *The hour has arrived!*"

CHAPTER THE LAST.

A DREAD MEETING.—THE STORM.—THE
CATASTROPHE.

ON the humble pallet of the village inn lay the broken form of the astrologer's expiring daughter. The surgeon of the place sat by the bedside, dismayed and terrified, despite his hardened vocation, by the wild words and ghastly shrieks that ever and anon burst from the lips of the dying woman. The words were, indeed, uttered in a foreign tongue, unfamiliar to the leech ; a language not ordinarily suited to inspire terror ; the language of love, and

poetry, and music; the language of the sweet South. But uttered in that voice where the passions of the soul still wrestled against the gathering weakness of the frame, the soft syllables sounded harsh and fearful; and the dishevelled locks of the sufferer—the wandering fire of the sunken eyes—the distorted gestures of the thin, transparent arms, gave fierce effect to the unknown words, and betrayed the dark strength of the delirium which raged upon her.

One wretched light on the rude table opposite the bed, broke the gloom of the mean chamber; and across the window flashed the first lightnings of the storm about to break. By the other side of the bed sate, mute, watchful, tearless, the Moorish girl, who was Lucilla's sole attendant—her eyes fixed on the sufferer with faithful, unwearying love; her ears listening, with all the quick sense of her race, to catch, amidst the growing noises of the storm,

and the tread of hurrying steps below—the expected sound of the hoofs that should herald Godolphin's approach.

Suddenly, as if exhausted by the paroxysm of her disease, Lucilla's voice sank into silence; and she lay so still, so motionless, that, but for the faint and wavering pulse of the hand, which the surgeon was now suffered to hold, they might have believed the tortured spirit was already released. This torpor lasted for some minutes, when raising herself up, as a bright gleam of intelligence flushed over the hollow cheeks, Lucilla put her finger to her lips, smiled, and said, in a low, clear voice, "Hark! he comes!"

The Moor stole across the chamber, and opening the door, stood there in a listening attitude. *She*, as yet, heard not the tread of the speeding charger;—a moment, and it smote her ear; a moment more it halted by

the inn door: the snort of the panting horse—the rush of steps—Percy Godolphin was in the room—was by the bedside—the poor sufferer was in his arms;—and softened, thrilled, overpowered, Lucilla resigned herself to that dear caress; she drank in the sobs of his choked voice; she felt still, as in happier days, burning into her heart the magic of his kisses. One instant of youth, of love, of hope broke into that desolate and fearful hour, and silent and scarcely conscious tears gushed from her aching eyes, and laved, as it were, the burthen and the agony from her heart.

The Moor traversed the room, and, laying one hand on the surgeon's shoulder, pointed to the door. Lucilla and Godolphin were alone.

“Oh!” said he, at last finding voice, “is it thus, thus we meet? But say not that you are dying, Lucilla! have mercy, mercy upon your betrayer, your ——”

Here he could utter no more; he sank beside her, covering his face with his hands, and sobbing bitterly.

The momentary lucid interval for Lucilla had passed away; the maniac rapture returned, although in a mild and solemn shape.

“Blame not yourself,” said she earnestly; “the remorseless stars are the sole betrayers: yet, bright and lovely as they once seemed when they assured me of a bond between thee and me, I could not dream that their still and shining lore could forebode such gloomy truths. Oh, Percy, since we parted, the earth has not been *as* the earth to me: the *Natural* has left my life; a weird and roving spirit has entered my breast, and filled my brain, and possessed my thoughts, and moved every spring of my existence: the sun and the air, the green herb, the freshness and glory of the world, have been covered with a mist

in which only dim shapes of dread were shadowed forth. But thou, my love, on whose breast I have dreamt such blessed dreams, wert not to blame. No ! the power that crushes, we cannot accuse : the heavens are above the reach of our reproach ; they smile upon our agony, they bid the seasons roll on, unmoved and unsympathizing, above our broken hearts. And what has been my course since your last kiss on these dying lips ? Godolphin"—and here Lucilla drew herself apart from him, and writhed, as with some bitter memory—"these lips have felt other kisses, and these ears have drunk unhallowed sounds, and wild revelry and wilder passion have made me laugh over the sepulchre of my soul. But I am a poor creature ; poor, poor—mad, Percy—mad—they tell me so !" Then, in the sudden changes incident to her disease, Lucilla continued—"I saw your bride, Percy, when you

bore her from Rome, and the wheels of your bridal carriage swept over me, for I flung myself in their way; but they scathed me not: the bright demons above ordained otherwise, and I wandered over the world; but you shall know not," added Lucilla, with a laugh of dreadful levity, "whither or with whom, for we must have concealments, my love, as you will confess; and I strove to forget you, and my brain sank in the effort. I felt my frame withering, and they told me my doom was fixed, and I resolved to come to England, and look on my first love once more; so I came, and I saw you, Godolphin; and I saw, by the wrinkles in your brow, and the musing thought in your eye, that your proud lot had not brought you content. And then there came to me a stately shape, and I knew it for her for whom you had deserted me: she told me, as you tell me, to live, to forget the past. Mockery,

mockery ! But my heart is proud as her's, Percy, and I would not stoop to the kindness of a triumphant rival, and I fled, what matters it whither ? But, listen, Percy, listen ; my woes had made me wise in that science which is not of earth, and I knew that you and I must meet once more, and that that meeting would be in this hour ; and I counted, minute by minute, with a savage gladness, the days that were to bring on this interview and my death !" and raising her voice into a wild shriek—"Beware, beware, Percy !—the rush of waters is on my ear—the splash, the gurgle !—Beware !—*your* last hour, also, is at hand !"

From the moment in which she uttered these words, Lucilla relapsed into her former frantic paroxysms. Shriek followed shriek ; she appeared to know none around her, not even Godolphin. With throes and agony the soul seemed to wrench itself from the frame. The

hours swept on—midnight came—clear and distinct the voice of the clock below reached that chamber.

“Hush!” cried Lucilla, starting. “Hush!” and just at that moment, through the window opposite, the huge clouds, breaking in one spot, discovered high and far above them a solitary star.

“Thine, thine, Godolphin!” she shrieked forth, pointing to the lonely orb; “it summons thee;—farewell, but not for long!”

* * * * *

The Moor rushed forward with a loud cry; she placed her hand on Lucilla's bosom; the heart was still, the breath was gone, the fire had vanished from the ashes: that strange unearthly spirit was perhaps with the stars for whose mysteries it had so vainly yearned.

Down fell the black rain in torrents ; and far from the mountains you might hear the rushing of the swelled streams, as they poured into the bosom of the valleys. The sullen, continued mass of cloud was broken, and the vapours hurried fast and lowering over the heavens, leaving now and then a star to glitter forth ere again "the jaws of darkness did devour it up." At the lower verge of the horizon, the lightning flashed fierce but at lingering intervals ; the trees rocked and groaned beneath the rains and storm ; and immediately above the bowed head of a solitary horseman broke the thunder that, amidst the whirl of his own emotions, he scarcely heard.

Beside a stream which the rains had already swelled, was a gipsy encampment ; and as some of the dusky itinerants, waiting perhaps the return of a part of their band from a predatory excursion, cowered over the flickering fires

in their tent, they perceived the horseman rapidly approaching the stream.

“ See to yon gentry cove,” cried one of the band ; “ ’tis the same we saw in the forenigh crossing the ford above. He has taken a short cut, the buzzard ! and will have to go round again to the ford ;—a precious time to be galivanting about.”

“ Pish !” said an old hag, “ I love to see the proud ones tasting the bitter wind and rain as we bears alway ; ’tis but a mile longer round to the ford. I wish it was twenty.”

“ Hallo !” cried the first speaker ; “ the fool takes to the water. He’ll be drowned ; the banks are too high and rough to land man or horse yonder. Hallo !” and with that painful sympathy which the hardest feel at the imminent peril of another when immediately subjected to their eyes, the gipsy ran forth into the pelting storm shouting to the traveller to halt.

For one moment Godolphin's steed still shrunk back from the rushing tide : deep darkness was over the water ; and the horseman saw not the height of the opposite banks. The shout of the gipsy sounded to his ear like the cry of the dead whom he had left : he dashed his heels into the sides of the reluctant horse, and was in the stream.

“ Light, light the torches !” cried the gipsy ; and in a few moments the banks were illumined with many a brand from the fire, which the rain however almost instantly extinguished ; yet by that momentary light they saw the noble animal breasting the waters, and perceived that Godolphin, discovering by the depth his mistake, had already turned the horse's head in the direction of the ford : they could see no more, but they shouted to Godolphin to turn back to the place from which he had plunged ; and in a few minutes afterwards, they heard, several yards above, the horse clambering up the rug-

ged banks which, there, were steep and high, and crushing the boughs that clothed the ascent. They thought, at the same time, that they distinguished also the splash of some heavy substance in the waves ; but they fancied it some detached fragment of earth or stone, and turned to their tent, in the belief that the daring rider had escaped the peril he had so madly incurred. That night the riderless steed of Godolphin arrived at the porch of the Priory,—where Constance, alarmed, pale, breathless, stood exposed to the storm, awaiting the return of Godolphin or the messengers she had despatched in search of him.

At daybreak, his corpse was found by the shallows of the ford ; and the mark of violence across the temples, as of some blow, led them to guess that in scaling the banks, his head had struck against one of the tossing boughs that overhung them, and the blow had precipitated him into the waters.

LETTER

FROM CONSTANCE, COUNTESS OF ERPINGHAM,

TO * * * * *

August 1832.

“ I HAVE read the work you have so kindly compiled from the papers transmitted to your care, and from your own intimate knowledge of those to whom they relate;—you have in much fulfilled my wishes with singular success. On the one hand, I have been anxious that a History should be given to the world, from which lessons so deep, and I firmly believe salutary, may be generally derived: on the other hand, I have been anxious that it should be clothed in such disguises that the names of the real actors in the drama should

be for ever a secret. Both these objects you have attained. It is impossible, I think, for any one to read the book about to be published, without being impressed with the truth of the moral it is intended to convey, and without seeing, by a thousand infallible signs, that its spring and its general course have flowed from reality and not fiction. Yet have you, by a few slight alterations and additions, managed to effect that concealment of names and persons, which is due no less to the living than to the memory of the dead.

“ So far I thank you, from my heart ; but in one point you have utterly failed. You have done no justice to the noble character you meant to delineate under the name of Godolphin ; you have drawn his likeness with a harsh and cruel pencil ; you have enlarged on the few weaknesses he might have possessed, until you have made them the foreground of the

portrait ; and his vivid generosity, his high honour, his brilliant intellect, the extraordinary stores of his mind, you have left in shadow. Oh, God ! that for such a being such a destiny was reserved ! and in the pride of life, just when his mind had awakened to a sense of its own powers and their legitimate objects. What a fatal system of things, that could for thirty-seven years have led away, by the pursuits and dissipations of aristocratic life, a genius of such an order, a heart of such tender emotions !* But on this subject I cannot, cannot write. I must lay down the pen ; to-morrow I will try and force myself to resume it.

“ Well then, I say, you have not done justice to *him*. I beseech you to remodel that

* The reader will acquit me of the charge of injustice to Godolphin's character when he arrives at this sentence ; it conveys exactly the impression that my delineation, faithful to truth, is intended to convey—the influences of our actual world on the ideal and imaginative order of mind.

character ; and atone to the memory of one, whom none ever saw but to admire, or knew but to love.

“ Of me, of me,—the vain, the scheming, the proud, the unfeminine cherisher of bitter thoughts, of stern designs—of me, on the other hand, how flattering is the picture you have drawn ! In that flattery is my sure disguise ; therefore I will not ask you to shade it into the poor and unlovely truth. But while, with agony and shame, I feel that you have rightly described that seeming neglectfulness of one no more, which sprang from the pride that believed *itself* neglected, you have not said enough—no, not one millionth part enough—of the *real love* that I constantly bore to him ; the only soft and redeeming portion of my nature. But who can know, who can describe, what another feels ? Even I knew not what I felt, until death taught it me.

“ Since I have read the whole book, one thought constantly haunts me—the strangeness that I should survive his loss; that the stubborn strings of my heart have not been broken long since; that I live, and live, too, amidst the world! Ay, but not one *of* the world; with that consciousness I sustain myself in the petty and sterile career of life. Shut out henceforth and for ever, from all the tenderer feelings that belong to my sex; without mother, husband, child, or friend; unloved and unloving, I support myself by the belief that I have done the little suffered to my sex, in expediting the great change which is advancing on the world; and I cheer myself by the firm assurance that, sooner or later, a time must come, when those vast disparities in life which have been fatal, not to myself alone, but to all I have admired and loved; which render the great heartless, and the lowly servile; which make

genius either an enemy to mankind or the victim to itself; which debase the energetic purpose; which flitter away the ennobling sentiment; which cool the heart and fetter the capacities, and are favourable only to the general developement of the Mediocre and the Luke-warm, shall, if never utterly removed, at least be smoothed away into more genial and unobstructed elements of society. Alas! it is with an aching eye that we look abroad for the only solace, the only occupation of life;—Solitude at home, and Memory at our hearth.”

THE END.

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the first of the year to be held at the
 college in the month of January. The
 purpose of the meeting was to discuss
 the various matters which had arisen
 during the year and to make such
 arrangements as might be necessary
 for the coming year. The meeting
 was held in the hall of the college
 and was attended by the members
 of the college and by a number of
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Godolphin, or, the oath

Bd.: 3

London 1833

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